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**Late Postcoloniality:
State, Violence and Wealth
in the Literatures of early 21st Century
Portuguese-speaking Africa
by
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
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List of Abbreviations

CEI	Casa dos Estudantes do Império House of The Students from the Empire
CONCP	Conferência das Organizações Nacionalistas das Colónias Portuguesas Conference of Nationalist Organizations of the Portuguese Colonies
FNLA	Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola National Front for the Liberation of Angola
Frelimo	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique Mozambican Liberation Front
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MLSTP	Movimento para a Libertação de São Tomé e Príncipe Movement for the Liberation of São Tomé and Príncipe
MpD	Movimento para a Democracia Movement for Democracy
MPLA	Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
PAICV	Partido Africano para a Independência de Cabo

	Verde
	African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde
	Verde
PAIGC	Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné-Bissau e Cabo Verde
	African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde
PALOP	Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa
	African Portuguese-speaking Countries
RENAMO	Resistência Nacional Moçambicana
	Mozambican National Resistance
UN	United Nations
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola
	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola

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Abstract

This study is a comparative analysis of the representations of State, violence and wealth in early 21st Century novels belonging to the literatures of Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and São Tomé and Príncipe. It departs from a dialogue with the international criticism of these national literatures and with the field of postcolonial studies to produce a critical intervention which responds to these two wide fields of academic inquiry. As a result, this work argues for a transformation in both fields. It proposes that both the critique of African Literatures written in Portuguese and the field of postcolonial studies must turn their attention to the post-independence internal dimension of these countries in order to promote a much needed refashioning of the concept of postcoloniality.

Introduction

The world, the critic, and the theory

[C]ritics are not merely the alchemical translators of texts into circumstantial reality or worldliness; they too are subject to and producers of circumstances, which are felt regardless of whatever objectivity the critic's methods possess. The point is that texts have ways of existing that even in their most rarified form are always enmeshed in circumstance, time, place, and society – in short they are in the world, and hence worldly. . . . The same implications are undoubtedly true of critics in their capacities as readers and writers in the world.

Edward W. Said,
The World, the Text, and the Critic.

This study conjugates different times and locations. Its many locations are expressed by its corpus, comprising novels conceived within the contexts of post-independence Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and São Tomé and Príncipe. They are also visible in its dialogue with the international community of the criticism of these literatures, whose organization within literary studies takes forms ranging from Lusophone Studies, in North America and the United Kingdom, to the Studies of African Literatures written in Portuguese, in Brazil. Disciplinarily, multi-locality is characterized by this study's embedding in

the field of Postcolonial Studies, which unites – even if not without its problems – intellectual perspectives of the global North and South; of the developed, developing and underdeveloped world. Perpendicular to these many places, this study's time axis departs from a present which, as a palimpsest of a number of layers of pasts, amalgamates traces of late 20th Century Portuguese colonialism and African anticolonialism, 1970's and 1980's African socialism, and post-1990's African neoliberalism. All these, coupled with the methodological tools of Comparative Literature, are understood to be essential for the refashioning of the crucial idea of postcoloniality; the proposition at the heart of the present work.

Notwithstanding the multi-locality and entangled temporality underlying this thesis, its inherently limited length and scope speak of a specific presentation of postcoloniality. Centered on the situated experiences conveyed by the texts of our corpus, the idea of postcoloniality proposed in the following chapters is one inspired by the abovementioned national literatures which, in this study, have been grouped under the name of African Literatures written in Portuguese, or the Literatures of Portuguese-speaking Africa. In either case, this kind of transnational cut is not uncontested, and for some in the field it can even be problematic. At a time where World Literature is “the big thing” of the moment in the field of Comparative Literary Studies, works centered in minor transnationalisms may exude a suspicious scent of fetish for an “old world order”, running the risk of being accused of endorsing it, or being classified as stale.

In any case, “old world order” is not the same as “dead world order”, and its loss of appeal for contemporary criticism may actually mean that it is as alive as ever. The quarrel here refers back to the issue of time and space. As Inocência Mata skillfully summarizes in her essay “Literatura-mundo em português: encruzilhadas em África”¹, the insistence on the abandonment of the view of these literatures in comparison with each other is part of a historically situated debate related to the ways in which these literatures found their way into European academia. As Mata tells us, from a perspective grounded largely in the development of these debates in Portugal, in the 1980’s there was a visible refusal to name the individual national literatures in Portuguese of the five African countries as such. When they finally made it into academia due to their undeniable richness, these literatures’ integration into syllabi was conditioned to a comparatism that used them to feed imperial nostalgias, opposing their contexts of emergence in important ways. For this reason, the informed critical view of these literatures that arose in the 1990’s was very committed to carving them an indisputably national, singular place (109-110). It was under these circumstances that the studies of these literatures grew in Brazil, led by scholars such as Benjamin Abdala Jr., Maria Aparecida Santilli, Laura Cavalcante Padilha and Simone Caputo Gomes. Laid out in this manner, although resistances to the type of comparison carried out in this study can be understood in their aim and history, they do not constitute a valid reason

¹ “World literature in Portuguese: intersections in Africa”

for why it should not be made. As the analytical chapters will demonstrate, our comparative approach not only aims for a critique of imperial nostalgias, but also does not prescind or occlude the relevance of any text's historical, political and economic situation. On the contrary, it is through the departure from these specificities in comparison that the present study finds common aesthetic elements which are essential for a critique of the current understanding of postcoloniality. Our perspective, thus, matches Mata's, when she states that "embora eu não esvazie . . . a ideia de 'literaturas nacionais', julgo ser produtivo captar a transnacionalidade dos estilos e a dinâmica das interlocuções entre esses sistemas, nas suas 'conjunções e disjunções', tensões e distensões"² (113).

Another important aspect in which this study refers back to the criticism of the literatures of Portuguese-speaking Africa is temporality, or better yet, timeliness. Much in line with studies considering texts published in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's from the point of view of the intrinsic connection between these literatures due to their shared emergence in a context of joint anticolonial reason and armed resistance, the present work's analysis of 21st Century texts shows a similar trend that is no longer taken for granted. As it is widely known, the texts conceived around the years in which these countries' independences were attained displayed a notion of culture much in line with anticolonial thought and efforts towards nation-

² "though not deflating . . . the idea of 'national literatures', I believe to be productive to capture the transnationality of the styles and dynamics of the dialogues between these systems, in their 'conjunctions and disjunctions', tensions and distensions"

building. What is less known and has become quite visible through our comparative analysis is that, even after the end of these countries' joint struggle, as well as after their drift in political, social and economic terms, their fiction still shares similar topics and displays related aesthetic choices. While it is undeniable that times have changed, this similarity may signal the permanence of a common enemy even after the settler has departed. If we translate anticolonialism and nation-building as oppositional reactions to colonial and, therefore external or foreign, forms of economic exploitation and cultural subjugation, the analyzed texts show that, currently, these literatures' expressions of postcoloniality and national criticism still thematize forms of economic exploitation and cultural subjugation. What has changed, though, is that the oppressor, now, seems to come from within. Thereby, the type of comparatism we propose does not antagonize or discard the existent currents of criticism. On the contrary, it sets out to take an engaged approach to these literatures further in time and deeper in space as it demonstrates that, at least when it comes to literary representations of it, the logic of an "old world order" is, definitely, not dead.

Yet, notwithstanding its value as a critical intervention in the international debate around the literatures of Portuguese-speaking Africa, the findings of this study also constitute a critique of theorizations in the field of Postcolonial Studies. Even when important strands of the field – namely the materialist one – do acknowledge that the "old (colonial) world order" is not dead, few are the systematic attempts – such as Achille

Mbembe's – to refashion its concepts from a perspective that departs from the internal dynamics of the postcolonies. In this sense, although reaching conclusions diverse from Mbembe's as a result of our studies' difference in terms of object and methods – he focuses on French and English-speaking Africa through a chiefly poststructuralist-informed psychoanalytical approach, while we look into Portuguese-speaking Africa oriented by a typically mixed postcolonial approach involving poststructural discourse analysis, anticolonial thought and world-systems theory – this work departs from a similar standpoint. As does Mbembe, we too believe that the experience from within the postcolony must be considered as an important locus of theorization in Postcolonial Studies.

The texts

Continuing our journey through the times and loci involved in this study we shall now speak of the corpus. While the geographic sites of the corpus were firmly set in the grounds of the five Portuguese-speaking African countries, other localizations considered in the selection involved were time, form, canonic locations and literary circulation. Since our aim was to reassess the timeliness of current ideas of postcoloniality, the contemporaneity factor was essential in the selection of texts. In other words, we have looked for texts whose context of production was neither too far from the context of production of this study, nor from each respective country's internal political and economic historical stage. Therefore, the boundaries in terms of time were, on the one hand, the

consolidation of each country's State sovereignty ratified by the demise of its main organized armed threat; and on the other hand, the consolidation of – at least nominal – forms of democratic government allied to a seemingly long-lasting adoption of a given economic system; which leaves us with three main categories of stabilization: peace, democracy and liberalism.

Considering this specific political and economic conjuncture, we see that although in Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Mozambique and in Guinea Bissau the military, political and economic decisions leading to the following period of stabilization were taken at different points in the course of the 1990's, Angola still experienced civil war until 2002. For this reason, the goal was to aim for works published after the turn of the century, but which were as far away as possible from its respective country's implementation of the measures leading up to their current historical period, in which one can see the condensation of different modes of stabilization. In a related manner, the aesthetic choice for the novel rather than poetry or registers of oral narratives, comes from the long-acknowledged intimacy between liberalism and the novel form, historically consubstantiated in its relations with the rise of the bourgeoisie that were immortalized by Hegel's formulation of the "novel as the modern bourgeois epic" later furthered by Lukács ("O romance como epopéia burguesa"³).

³ Text originally published in the Russian *Literary Encyclopedia*. Vol. IX, Moscow, 1935. This Portuguese translation was made by Letizia Zini Antunes from the texts' 1976 version in Italian, and from its' 1974 version in French.

The next two important coordinates for the selection of the corpus were the notion of literary circulation and each work's relative position within the canon of the national literature of which it partakes. The first of these categories refers back to the critical field within which this work has been conceived, which is to say that we looked for novels that could be found – with the constraints that obtaining most works of these literatures inherently entails – outside their contexts of production, evidencing these texts' presence in an international discussion. The second aspect sought to add some variety to the canon of authors and titles already addressed in the field in an attempt to also contribute to the widening of the sample size of studied texts available for consideration. Nonetheless, this criterion has also been influenced by the desire to conceive a study that would balance the insertion of texts by authors that enjoy different levels of familiarity to the international reader. This way we have united less known novels by known authors, in some cases, and more known novels by relatively unknown authors.

The end result of this selective process still had a final stage regarding how canonical the known authors were. The idea was to avoid the overly studied work of Pepetela and Mia Couto, from Angola and Mozambique, respectively, in order to contribute to an expansion of materials available for future comparative inquiries between authors of these countries. As a result, the corpus is constituted of: *Tiara* (1999) by the Guinean Filomena Embaló; *Campo de Trânsito* ([Transit Camp] 2007) by

the Mozambican João Paulo Borges Coelho; *Marginais* ([Marginals] 2010) by the Cape Verdean Evel Rocha; *Aurélia de Vento* ([Aurélia of Wind] 2011) by the Santomean Albertino Bragança; and *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento* (2012 [A General Theory of Oblivion, 2015]) by the Angolan José Eduardo Agualusa. Since only Agualusa's novel is available in English, through a translation by Daniel Hahn, all quotations from other novels in this study will be translated into English by its author.

Given the wide geographical aspect and disjunctive nature of the corpus' selection criteria, it can be argued that the literary texts considered in this study might not share much more than the same language. This is certainly true and was so intended. Conceived in a context in which this type of comparison is often accused of being an archaism given recent investment by criticism in solidifying these literature's national paradigms, the hypothesis of a continued historical relation between these contexts driving this study could only be proved (or dismissed) by the investigation of texts produced in a limited yet vast enough array to allow the inclusion of novels with substantially diverse aesthetic configurations.

Tiara is the oldest novel and although it has circulated internationally since it was published by the Portuguese Instituto Camões, is still less known than the country's widely recognized novels by Abdulai Silla – the trilogy *Eterna Paixão* (1994 [Eternal Love]), *A Última Tragédia* (1995 [The Last Tragedy]), and *Mistida* (1997). It is the only novel by its author, who has published a collection of texts and short stories – *Carta*

Aberta (2005 [Open Letter]) – and a volume with poems – *Coração Cativo* (2008 [Captive Heart]). *Tiara* is the only novel in our corpus that is written by a woman and its content is often seen under the light of autobiography. Its narrative in fact runs in parallel with the trajectory of the author who has publicly admitted: “Vivi um período de grande revolta pessoal que só consegui ultrapassar através de um trabalho de introspecção que me levou à escrita e através desta à redefinição da minha identidade, desta vez numa óptica multinacional, tal como é, afinal de contas, a minha essência”⁴ (“O que representa para mim o projecto Guiné-Bissau Contributo”).

The novel consists of a narrative about an eponymous heroine who, just like Embaló who was born in Angola, migrated during her youth from one African country to join the independence struggle of another remaining there until the aftermath of the independence when, after two decades of public service, she is stripped away from her State functions by the independent regime. Deeply disillusioned, Tiara abandons the country’s public life. This trajectory is mirrored by the reason behind Embaló’s migration to France, where she was last known to have worked in an international cultural institute – dissolved in 2013. While the general lines of this novel do parallel the author’s biography, its precise extent is not known as there is an entire emotional and personal aspect to the struggle of Tiara that cannot be verified in terms of the author’s lived experience. In

⁴ “I have lived a period of great personal outrage that I could only outgrow after a the exercise of introspection that led me to writing and through this redefinition of my identity, this time through from a multinational perspective, such as mine is, after all”

any case, our approach to this third-person narrative novel takes it as a work of fiction, whose connection is deeply enmeshed in the conflicts of the country in relation to which it is conceived.

Campo de Trânsito is another example of the dubious and complex connection between fiction and history, as Mozambique did in fact maintain prison camps that “disciplined and punished” those who were unfortunate enough to end up there. One of the author’s nine prose-fiction works published from 2003 to date, *Campo* is Borges Coelho’s penultimate novel and one of his least studied works. After this novel he published a prize-winning narrative – *O Olho de Hertzog* (2010 [Hertzog’s Eye]) – and two novellas. A professor of History at University Eduardo Mondlane in Maputo, Borges Coelho’s PhD thesis defended at the University of Bradford (UK) thematized the colonial and post-independence resettlement of peasants in his home country, which might have proven important in the writing of this book. Critics are fierce in their commentaries regarding the novel’s potential critique of the country’s recent history. While some are categorical in affirming the historical connection as the best way of reading the narrative (Moreira, “Memória e História em Campo de Trânsito”), some seem to be much too keen on totally avoiding it (Mendonça, “Ovídio e Kafka nas margens do Lúrio”). What is certain is that while the novel does relate to Mozambique’s history and internal critique of its recent past, it does establish a connection with other forms of artistic work such as Licínio Azevedo’s 2012 film, *Virgem Margarida* (Virgin Margarida), which

portrays the story of a young woman taken to one of these camps as a result of being mistaken for a prostitute. In any case, just as the author has expressed himself, the novel is not only about this episode of the country's history as it “procura colocar algumas questões relativas ao absurdo na nossa civilização global. Ou seja, não se trata de uma abordagem ‘cautelosa’ dos campos de reeducação.” ⁵(Borges Coelho, “Entrevista a João Paulo Borges Coelho”). Its insertion in this study is chiefly motivated by the criteria mentioned previously, but also by the novel's relative small critical reception and crafted allegorical form.

Just marginally known in the strong body of works that compose the Cape Verdean literature, *Marginais* is almost metonymic. Its author, Evel Rocha, is a politician on the island of Sal – the same which serves as background to his literature –, whose literary work first came out in 1997, boasting two novels and two poetry collections to date, as well as three novels currently awaiting publication (“Evel Rocha regressa poemas de ‘Cinzas Douradas’”). The plot of *Marginais* consists of the story of Sérgio do Rosário, or Sérgio Pitbull, whose wretched existence is underlined by the inequality of his island, whose tourism industry preys on the poor to fill the pockets of the local elite and foreign investors. The narrative is colored by an impressive naturalist aesthetics capable of portraying a very realist picture of poverty's gruesomeness and abjection. Rocha's work is important

⁵ “it aims at posing some questions about the absurdities of our global civilization. In other words, it is not a ‘cautious’ approach to the reeducation camps”

as it has been classified as a novelty in the literature of Cape Verde. As Mário Lugarinho explains: “Sua ‘novidade’ consiste no [seu tratamento do] espaço, que não oferece mais sentido, como acontecia na produção mais tradicional. Se a terra, tanto na geração claridosa⁶, quanto naquelas que lhe seguiram, oferecia sentido a um anseio de identidade nacional autônoma, em *Marginais* essa mesma terra perde o seu estatuto privilegiado – [de] espaço geográfico onde a nação se concretiza.”⁷ (“Em Cabo Verde, os *Marginais*, de Evel Rocha” 220). By moving away from the idea of nation and problematizing the institutions mediating the very means of social, economic and human development, this still little known narrative is an important addition to our corpus.

Another marginally known novel of the corpus is the Santomean *Aurélia de Vento* by Albertino Bragaça. Politician and writer, the author has published three works so far: one volume with four short-stories and two novels. While his first novel, *Um Clarão sobre a Baía* (2005 [A Flash over the Bay]) has been the object of some critical commentary – to the extent that Santomean prose is the object of commentary – our analysis looks into his latest novel, a curious case precisely because the ideological, political and sociocultural aspects of society are not advertised as the main topic of

⁶ *Claridoso* or *claridosa* is an adjective denoting a relation with the Cape Verdean literary journal *Claridade* of the 1930’s that played an important role in the rise of the country’s national identity.

⁷ “Its ‘novelty’ consists in its [treatment of the] space, which no longer has a meaning, as it was common in traditional texts. If the country, both in the *claridosa* generation and in those that followed it, gave meaning to the desire of an autonomous national identity, in *Marginais* this same country loses this privileged position – [of] geographical space where the nation becomes concrete”.

the book. While in *Um Clarão sobre a Baía*, the initial epigraph clearly announces the politically-loaded content of the book “[à] Memória do Sr. Lerenio da Mata, um patriota injustiçado e tão tragicamente desaparecido. Para todos quantos passaram, inocentes, pelo sinistro silêncio das masmorras”⁸, in *Aurélia de Vento* the epigraph is an unpublished poem by the Portuguese poet, Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, made public for the first time posthumously, in a Portuguese newspaper that examined the collection of her documents on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of her passing⁹. It is an epigraph that sets the stage for a much more personal, subjective pace, which certainly is at odds with the more openly engaged prose of the author, or with the tradition of prose fiction in the country. In fact, the narrative revolves around Aurélia, the beautiful, fair and strong mixed-race daughter of the white farmer Pedro Santos. In this story both characters are heavily antagonized and succeed only with the support of the country’s mass of peasants sensitive to their cause. While the novel sets the stage for a narrative of intimism and overcoming, it delivers a much more revealing picture of the current dynamics of class system in Santomean

⁸ “[to] the Memory of Mr. Lerenio da Mata, a wronged patriot and so tragically disappeared. To all those innocents, who went through the sinister silence of the dungeons”. Mr. da Mata, afther of the Santomean critic Inocência Mata, was arrested and killed in prison in 1978 during the single-party State regime, under the presidency of Manuel Pinto da Costa.

⁹ The poem, whose title “Inocência e Possibilidades” (Inocence and Possibilities) is omitted in Bragança’s quote, was written in 1943: “As imagens eram próximas (The images were close)/ Como coladas sobre os olhos (As if bonded to the eyes)/ O que nos dava um rosto justo e liso (What would give us a fair and smooth face)/ Os gestos circulavam sem choque nem ruído (The movements would go noisless and with grace)/ As estrelas eram maduras como frutos (Stars were ripe as fruits)/ E os homens eram bons sem dar por isso.” (And men were good without much realization).

society. Additionally, it also adds to the number of female protagonists considered in our corpus, an aspect which connects it with the most recent of the texts contemplated in this study, José Eduardo Agualusa's *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*.

Agualusa is, without doubt, the most widely known and prolific writer whose work has been selected for this study. His works, published between 1989 to date, amount to 28 titles including novels, collections of poems and short stories, novellas and children's literature. His works have been translated into 25 languages and he is, arguably, the most prolific writer of Angola – Pepetela who has been publishing since 1972 has 24 titles out to date; nonetheless he is possibly the Angolan writer with most academic prestige. Amongst Agualusa's 13 novels published until 2014, *Teoria* occupies the 10th position. With so many publications to his name, Agualusa is a difficult author to follow which results in his earlier novels being the ones studied the most. With so much to choose from, our criteria was Agualusa's latest novel at the time that this study was started.

The story revolves around 28 years in the life of Ludovica Fernandes Mano, a Portuguese spinster brought to Angola by her sister who married a wealthy Angolan engineer shortly before the Carnation Revolution and the country's independence. Ludo is portrayed as a simple woman who fears going outdoors, a fear that drives her to seal the door of her apartment after her sister and brother-in-law go to a farewell party and never return. As the protagonist spends the years safely locked in the penthouse of what had

been a luxurious building, we witness with her, from above, the changes taking place in the post-independence area. Linked to the rest of the city of Luanda by the narrative of her brother-in-law's forgotten diamonds, used by Ludo as bait to attract a pigeon who flies away taking in its little stomach a small fortune to other hands, we follow the development of a number of characters, all interlinked with the present, the past, the diamonds and each other. Conflating history and subjectivity in almost three decades into the aftermath of Angolan independence, this narrative definitely offers a contemporary view on the postcolony that is essential to this study.

Methodology and structure

Given the variety of novels in our corpus, it is evident that studying them together presents some challenges. As has been mentioned early on, this study is deeply indebted to comparatism as method. For this reason, we have chosen not to treat each text separately, on individual chapters as is often the case, but to comparatively investigate how some themes were aesthetically shaped by each of the novels studied. The first step, thus, was the isolation of the three core common themes in novels that were not thematically chosen, which was already a test of this works' hypothesis. After a careful reading of the corpus, three main common themes were found: State, violence and wealth. Although prominent in different degrees in each of the narratives, it has been noted that these themes happened to be structural both to the narratives and to the societies from which they

emerged, thus constituting the thematic axis for the comparative study that is composed of the parts described, in detail, below.

Chapter 1 is the section of this thesis in which issues regarding critical and disciplinary embedding are treated. It places the works within the international field of the studies of the literatures of Portuguese-speaking Africa, and shows the intersection of this field – and this study – with the arena of Postcolonial Studies. Here, attention is drawn to the problematic potential of current ways of reading texts from these literatures, namely their importance for a discussion of nation-building and identity formation overly grounded in relations of *inter-* national order in detriment of *intra-* national tensions. Similarly, the chapter also points to the existence of these problems in postcolonial theory and proposes, through the observation of the concept of intra-colonialism, new critical ways to look into contemporary formations of postcolony from inside.

The next three chapters – Chapter 2, 3 and 4 – are dedicated to the analysis of the themes of State, violence and wealth; each structured in a slightly different way to accommodate the literary fashioning of these themes without losing sight of the thesis' comparative method. As a result, each chapter shares an introduction that historically situates the diverse ways in which the given theme has been relevant to the texts' contexts of production – from the anticolonial struggle to the present –, an analytical section, and a comparative section where main common features, as well as

the relationship between them, are highlighted. It is in these chapters' analytical sections that the main differences in approach can be found.

Chapter 2, "From nation to state", is the most context-specific one given the essential local aspect of the organization of the machine of the State. For this reason, while the historical connections between these States are treated in the introduction of the chapter, the analytical section is divided into five parts; one for each novelistic representation of the State. Chapter 3, "The weapon of violence" is structured in a much different manner. Given the vast array of ways through which violence presents itself and its deep penetration in each of the narratives, the part following the introductory section, in which the importance of violence is historically contextualized, is further separated into three different subchapters discussing State, gender and memory violence. This chapter, therefore, constitutes the longest of this thesis as the relevance of each mode of violence demanded a small introduction of its own. Nonetheless, its presentation as one single chapter was still essential as it shows an overall progression, perceived in all novels, in the representation of violence from physical to symbolic means of coercion which is attached, as we propose, to the concealment of violence inherent to democratic forms of political organization coupled with neoliberal economics. Chapter 4 "The matter of wealth", therefore, is structured in such a way as to demonstrate how wealth is represented in the novels. The analytical part that follows the introduction of the topic, is organized around the three different modes of wealth concentration common

to the novels and to the history of their countries: State wealth, wealth in transition from the State to private hands, and private wealth. The following and last part of this thesis is its Conclusion, “Towards a late postcoloniality”. Here, we return to this work’s critique of postcolonial studies and seek to demonstrate, in the light of the points raised along the analytical chapters, the necessity for a refashioning of the idea of postcolony that is addressed with the proposition of the concept of *late postcoloniality*.

Altogether, this work’s proposition aims at adding a supplementary contribution to the two major and interconnected fields within which it is inserted, the criticism of the literatures of Portuguese-speaking Africa and postcolonial studies. Understanding the differences between these key areas in the dynamics of a world organized through intricate webs of relations amongst centers and peripheries, we hope to contribute, with this research, to the diversification of the locus of theorization, which is fundamental in a continuous struggle against existing hegemonies.

Chapter 1

To Begin with: Where we are

We must begin *wherever we are* and the thought of the trace, which cannot not take the scent into account, has already taught us that it was impossible to justify a point of departure absolutely. *Wherever we are*: in a text where we believe ourselves to be.

Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*.

By suggesting that we should begin wherever we (think we) are, Derrida forces us to rethink our own position. “Where am I?” one has to ask oneself. Or, even before getting there, what does one mean by “where”? Would this word be behaving as the interrogative adverb asking for one’s location or as the subordinate conjunction asking for one’s relation?

In the course of this study, some attention to “where” is fundamental. Not because by “where” some usually mean fixity. On the contrary, this word is of interest here precisely because of both its adverbiality, insofar as it interrogates the place, and its relationality highlighting its playfulness, the condition through which it can signify. Hence, “where” is here to remind us that this study does not depart from totalities, from purities and that, whatever our coordinates may be, our position is always relational. If we are to “begin” in Saidian terms, we should aim for a literary critique that

“inaugurate[s] a deliberately other production of meaning – a gentile (as opposed to a sacred one)... [which] claims a status alongside other works... [being] another work, rather than in a line of descent from X or Y” (*Beginnings* 13). For this reason we should, first of all, refer to those other works; for we only exist in relation to them.

If there is one aspect that marks the critique of the African literatures written in Portuguese which we examine in this study, that aspect is *where*. Notwithstanding the fact that we are going to be approaching the literary works produced within the contexts of Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and São Tomé and Príncipe, the critique with which we engage comes from different parts of Europe, the United States and Brazil. We dialogue, thus, with a *foreign* critique of African literatures written in Portuguese. The reason for this choice is, nonetheless, rather simple. Despite being the condition which the present work both shares and emerges from, foreignness is, however, a significantly under-addressed topic when it comes to the consideration of the critique in the field.

The study of literary works that have emerged within any of the five African Portuguese-speaking countries has been, since its beginning, an activity marked by transnationality. Prompted mostly and primarily by colonialism in its control of both academic and editorial activity, the intellectual diaspora of the African intelligentsia has, since very early on, set the pace for African literature outside Africa. As is already widely known, the CEI or *Casa dos Estudantes do Império* (House of the Students of the

Empire [1944-1965]) in Lisbon played an essential role in gathering African students, many of whom were committed to the cause of independence and to the end of colonialism, such as Amílcar Cabral and Agostinho Neto among many others. The institution was also responsible for publishing the journal *Mensagem* which, between 1949 and 1964, was an important means of diffusion of literature and ideas of the African diaspora in the metropole. Even as evidence of the transnational context in which the literatures of the Portuguese-speaking African countries emerged, the CEI was not the only instance of it. As Pires Laranjeira reports, between the 1960's and the time in which the independences were achieved, the diaspora was an important site of literary production of the then Portuguese colonies – at the time treated by the government in Lisbon as “Overseas Provinces” – and the places of publication would not only include the metropolis, but also France, Italy, the Soviet Union and Brazil (28-29). Although the reverberations of those African publications in the developed world have yet to be subject to extensive study – reflecting the reproduction of vicious trends in which research of influences follows the hegemonic power imbalances resulting in a wide interest in studying Western influences in different parts of Africa; whilst African influences in the West garner little attention –, Laura Padilha offers an important account of the impact of Castro Soromenho's *Terra Morta* (1949) in Brazilian academia. She affirms that “toda uma geração de universitários de letras, portanto, se formou ouvindo rumores sobre lugares africanos de nós tão distantes, mas onde se falava a nossa língua e de onde

vieram homens e mulheres que sagraram as cores dos corpos de muitos de nós”¹ (“Os estudos literários africanos no Brasil” 210). Therefore, by Padilha’s account, the availability of the works by an African author was essential for the development of the study and the critique of African literature written in Portuguese in the country. For this reason, the publication of Castro Soromenho’s trilogy, composed of the above mentioned *Terra Morta*, *Viragem* (1957) and *A Chaga* (1970), in Brazil was a condition that played a major role in the country’s academic interest in for those literatures.

Although many critics in the field like to evoke Benedict Anderson to speak of nation formation, not so many like to quote him when he traces the origins of national consciousness to the national languages as an advent of “print-capitalism, which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways” (26). It is striking to note how often even engaged postcolonial critics tend to overlook that, in order to exist, literature depends on the book as a means, and that the very conditions of production of the literature as a cultural good marks the literary system as understood in its cycle from the author to the reader, and from the critic to the educational

¹ “a whole generation of university students in the field of language and literature, therefore, graduated under the rumors of African locations so distant from us, but where our language was spoken and whence came men and women who sanctified the colors of the bodies of many of us”

system.² The establishment of foreign critical reception of literary works by Portuguese-speaking Africans is thus – for better or worse –, in congruence with the very conditions of production of many of those literary works themselves. This does not mean, however, that the foreign critique is either above suspicion or is the *only* critique. Even though this is not our object of study here – though it would, in fact, be material for quite extensive research – it is a fact in the same way that certain authors’ literary works do not travel among the transnational field of research of the African literatures written in Portuguese, so the critique by Africans is very little circulated away from its places of emergence. In a 2010 text about the development and the consolidation of the African literatures, Ana Mafalda Leite (“Breve história, tópicos e questões sobre o ensino das Literaturas Africanas de Língua Portuguesa”), for example, traces the development of those studies in Portugal, Brazil, England and the United States, but little attention is given to the development of those studies within Africa, which makes unclear whether she only meant to examine foreign studies or whether she was looking at the field as a whole. Such a distinction, followed by a brief but necessary investigation into the existent critical works written within Portuguese-speaking Africa, is made more clearly by Hamilton who, in 2004, acknowledged that “foreign academics [are the ones who] have written the majority of the book-length studies of lusophone African

² An issue which starts to be explored by strands of the field of World Literature. See Pascale Casanova’s *The World Republic of Letters*.

literature” (“African Literature” 618). It seems that while the much needed debate about the gender and color of the African authors whose work is chosen to circulate in the transnational community of Portuguese-speakers has finally been initiated – vide Inocência Mata’s essay “A Utopia Cosmopolita e a Recepção das Literaturas Africanas” –, the debate about the place of enunciation of these literature’s criticism is yet to materialize. In a context where discussions involving the – historically evident – impact of social privileges in the production and circulation of a cultural artifact, as enmeshed in elitism as literature, are still a problem, matters certainly get worse in the realm of criticism³. Whether this has to do with its close connection to the industry of education, or its commitment with literatures conceived to deconstruct cultural hegemony, it is certain that queries with the potential to unveil, in the criticism of today, lingering relations of inequality dating back from the times of colonialism can be unsettling. As Mata points out very well “a questão . . . comporta – disso tenho plena consciência – demasiados melindres ideológicos, muitas vezes fulanizados,

³ Particularly interesting examples of this kind of heated discussion in the field could be seen during the International Colloquium: *Percursos, Trilhos e Margens: Recepção e Crítica das Literaturas Africanas em Língua Portuguesa* [Trajectories, Trails and Margins: Reception and Criticism of the African Literatures written on Portuguese], organized by Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, Jessica Falconi and Elena Brugioni in July 2011. Although proceedings of this colloquium are unfortunately not available, a better idea of the clash of positions can be obtained from the analysis of the conference program, available online at http://www.ces.uc.pt/ficheiros2/files/Programa_14_15_Julho.pdf.

nefastos num debate cultural descomprometido com julgamentos históricos.”⁴ (7)

Highlighting the foreignness that marks much of the critique of literatures written in Portuguese in Africa is not an attempt to undermine criticism that comes from abroad. It is not our intention here to depart from any essentialist perspective of truth in which only endogenous criticism would account for the contextual reality – thus being the only one able to lead to the “real meaning” – of the literary work. To do so would suggest a disregarding of, at least, the last forty years of discussion in literary theory. Moreover, despite the fact that we do value and hope for a wider widespread of endogenous criticism of African literatures precisely by its multiple enabling possibilities, we do not believe that critical quality relies on inside/outside perspectives. When it comes to the impact of distance in sight, one must always keep in mind that, just like myopia, hypermetropia too is a condition which demands the use of corrective lenses.

Even if the location of the critique is not necessarily a problem, given that both endogenous and exogenous critiques offer complementary views on a given cultural artifact, to point the loci of enunciation of the critical discourse is important as it helps us to understand its insights and blind spots. If we take into account that critics “too are subject to and producers of circumstances, which are felt regardless of whatever

⁴ “put this way the matter encompasses – as I am well aware of – many maleficent ideological issues, often personalized, in a cultural debate disengaged of historical considerations”

objectivity the critic's methods possess . . . that texts have ways of existing that even in their most rarified form are always enmeshed in circumstance, time, place, and society – in short they are in the world, and hence worldly” (Said *The World* 35), we should commit to read them “with the same awareness of ambivalence that is brought to the study of non-critical literary texts.”(de Man 110)

To treat the critical text as worldly demands that we take into account the possibilities and constraints connected to the very material contexts within and towards which the critical discourse emerges. By being worldly, and thus circumstantial, the critical effort is always incomplete in the sense that it can never encompass the totality of the analyzed work. It is only through this earthly, perspectival view that it is possible to look at a critical works' blind spots in order to unveil its insights. Once the worldly conditions of a critical text confer incompleteness upon it, its lacks – or blindness, as Paul de Man wrote in *Blindness & Insight* – are the very conditions enabling the insights it brings to the fore, and which constitute our point of departure. Therefore, this study begins precisely “where” others have decided not to go.

Of blindness and insight

If there is a point of blindness on exogenous critical discourse on African works written in Portuguese, it would be the postcoloniality of their contemporary internal affairs. Such a trend is slowly being acknowledged,

as we can see through the work of Fernando Arenas who, in the closing paragraph of his book *Lusophone Africa: Beyond Independence*, states that

[the book] aims to move the discussion beyond the heroic accounts of the liberation struggles and away from overly cautious and *acritical approaches to the political establishment* in nations such as Angola and Mozambique that have prevailed in the humanities, especially in the field of literary studies. (204; emphasis added)

Having begun at very turbulent times, the study of African works in Portuguese came hand in hand with the very political engagement whose theme constituted those literary pieces. The first systematic study of the literary history of the Portuguese-speaking African countries came initially in English, with Russell Hamilton's *Voices from an Empire: A History of Afro-Portuguese Literature*, published in 1975, at around the same time that the independences of Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé and Príncipe had just been recognized by the Portuguese government. It is interesting to note that, even though it was written during the colonial period in which the five Portuguese-speaking spaces talked about were still colonies, not nation-states, Hamilton's book is clearly organized according to the national literatures' study model, an attitude that can be seen as denotative of strong political connotation. With a full section on Angola, one on Mozambique, one on the Cape Verde Islands – within which we find “The Case of Portuguese Guinea (Guinea-Bissau)” (358) –

and a section on São Tomé and Príncipe, Hamilton organizes his book treating almost each literary system as national and independent as he states that “despite their obvious interrelationships, the four parts of this study can be read independently of each other with no loss of coherence.”(22)

Besides the fact that Hamilton’s book is not pamphleteering, its apparently neutral tone does not hide the very liminal moment from which he writes. As terms such as the colonial “Portuguese Guinea” come side by side with its independent counterpart “Guinea-Bissau” or “African literature of Portuguese expression” can be interchanged with a term like “Afro-Portuguese” literature, it is interesting to note that, despite conceived within colonial times, the postcolonial perspective exhaled by many of the studied texts determines the vacillating terminology of the critical work itself. Later on, what we see in the development of the critical studies towards African literatures in Portuguese is marked by this certain contamination of the critical work by the political inclination of the literary material. At a time in which the critical exercise went through the test of political relevance – in which the complexity of a structuralist approach shows itself as insufficient to deal with literary material coming from other geographies than the Western world – such a tendency, which was almost subliminal in Hamilton, will end up constituting the political inclination of later critical works. In its function as gatekeeper of the canon, criticism developed an important political role to the extent that it helped the cultural legitimization – in Western terms – of recently independent countries’ literary system as it

brought to attention authors and works from other locations considering the worldiness of their literary texts of emergency. This is the moment from which we can note a clear commitment to the critique of African literatures in Portuguese with nationalist causes.

Coming back to Fernando Arenas' observation, it looks like the very engagement that constituted criticism's vanguard might have contributed to its current blindness. In its commitment to support the legitimacy of the recently independent countries, criticism has supported the nationalist movements in their cultural crusade towards the imagination of national communities aiming at providing a soul to their States' geopolitical bodies. Nevertheless, at the time of Arenas' book release, 36 years after the constitutional acts which legitimized the political formation of those nation-states, the situation had become much more complex. It was not without serious controversy that the anticolonial nationalist movements had moved from colonial opposition to postcolonial situation. Yet, despite essential political, economic and cultural changes in these literature's contexts of production, the major critical discourse remains the same.

In those almost forty years of independence, the victorious struggle for independence gave way to civil wars in both Angola (1975-2002) and Mozambique (1977-1992), as well as to complicated democratic processes reflected by irregular and accidental presidential successions throughout the five countries. In what has happened so far, São Tomé and Príncipe counts two attempted *coups d'état*. Guinea-Bissau had the power given to its

longest-reigning president due to a coup. João Bernadino (Nuno) Vieira held power for a total of 23 years, split into four mandates – although it is reported that two other unsuccessful attempted coups had taken place in 1983 and 1985 (Forrest 2002) – until a final uprising led to the 1998-1999 civil war that ended with the 2000 election. Between 2000 and 2012, Guinea-Bissau suffered yet another coup in 2003, a presidential assassination – Nuno Vieira – in 2009, and its most recent coup in 2012. Cape Verde's political constitution is seen by many as one of the smoothest in Africa. Without civil wars or coups, one can only notice that the relatively long term of the last two elected presidents for 2 mandates (10 years in total for each president), resulted, however, from largely uncontested elections. Apparently as smooth, but not as uncontested, has been Mozambique's permanence in power of the Frelimo party that, since 1975, has provided the only four presidents to govern the country. Less inclined to changes, the MPLA has been leading Angola with the indication of only one candidate for presidency who, being in power since the country's socialist times, has won the last three elections and has been in power for more than 35 years. In the light of these facts, it is hard to believe that the almost 40 years' literary production in Portuguese-speaking Africa has been little engaged with these internal political developments. If this is so, how could Arenas remark a tendency to acritical approaches to political establishments by the literary studies?

In an attempt to find an answer we can turn to Phillip Rothwell's *A Postmodern Nationalist: Truth, Orality and Gender in the Work of Mia Couto*. Published in 2004, Rothwell's study looks into Mia Couto's works published between 1987 and 2001, which is deeply grounded in the aftermath of the independence in Mozambique. As the title itself already announces, Rothwell sees Mia Couto as a nationalist. Such an idea is, alone, pretty much widespread through the field in which criticism often comes as a legitimating voice that affirms the canonic rights of those literatures by electing works and writers able to evoke a certain spirit – or rather a (Holy) ghost – of the nation. What is new in Rothwell is his willingness to look at the postmodern features of Couto's works, seeing him (as a metonym for his works) still as a nationalist; but a postmodern one.

To see – the work of – Mia Couto in its modified nationalism, as proposed by Rothwell's title, sounds very much like a step ahead in comprehending the implications brought by a contemporary African literature enmeshed in the aftermath of independence. In its impossibility to portray the Grand Narrative, the use of postmodern aesthetics in national(istic) contexts could work as indicative of the nation's problematic internal state of affairs. However, this is not Rothwell's approach. Seen in its implication as the cultural logic of globalization, the postmodern aesthetic present in Couto's productions is a contradiction to the author's – presumed – nationalistic aims. The strength of Rothwell's critical position can be strongly felt already in his book's opening lines:

In a world where the executives of multinational corporations and aid-agency officials often wield more influence than government ministers over supposedly sovereign states, *nationalism and an assertion of national identity is an increasingly weak refuge for those wishing to oppose the inexorable trend towards globalization. Yet it remains, along with religious fundamentalism, one of the principal counterbalances to unfettered neoliberal capitalism* in an age that has rejected the socialist experiment. For good or for bad, nationalism invariably operated by putting up barriers to distinguish between the national group and the foreign, making it *the perfect ideological opponent to globalization*, once class struggle is excluded from the equation Globalization wants to dissolve the border, which, as a range of critics have pointed out, culturally allies it with the postmodern project since postmodernism recognizes no boundary and rejects the primacy of binary demarcations. (15; emphasis added)

In the light of these considerations, Rothwell continues his analysis of Couto's work from the premise of the author's "obsession for blurring frontiers, the overriding characteristic assigned to postmodernism"(32). The book then follows in the form of a crescendo in which the critic sees the resolution of the author's contradictory traces – the conjugation of

postmodern aesthetics and nationalism – as he completes a process of maturation that culminates at the point when Couto is seen abandoning his postmodern position and reaching a “postcolonial maturity” (170); a term that leads the discussion developed in the concluding chapter of the book. For Rothwell, postcolonial maturity is reached as Couto’s “evolution as a writer has reached the point where it is no longer sufficient just to ask questions. The time has come for answers to be furnished” (172), and those answers come when the author decided to center his narrative back on the nation.

Complementary to Rothwell’ perspective towards the national in detriment of the postmodern, and probably in an attempt to rescue the author from eventual apolitical accusations commonly destined to those who serve themselves of that aesthetics, Rothwell affirms “the techniques of the postmodernism, as employed by Mia Couto, do not proscribe the creation of *a national identity*” (169; emphasis added). Consequently, Rothwell develops his analysis of Couto’s postmodern style by seeing it as a deliberate strategy of destabilizing Western binarisms. In his view, Couto’s work disavows both Platonic and Hegelian traditions as he blurs the frontiers between oral and written “on a repudiation of the demarcations privileged by Western traditional culture” (172), against which a Mozambican national identity should be shaped. In accordance with this line of thought, the work of Couto is put in relation to Western thinkers such as Nietzsche, Derrida, Saussure and Lévi-Strauss, as well as to the

aforementioned Plano and Hegel. As we can see throughout his book, every step of Rothwell's thought reinforces its main argument that views Couto's aesthetic destruction of conceptual boundaries in relation to truth, orality and gender as an appropriation of the postmodern apolitical tool to meet political nationalistic ends – met when he finally reaches a “postcolonial maturity”.

One of the gains brought about by Rothwell's reflections, is his postcolonial reading that recuperates Mia Couto's works as a non-Western literary corpus, able to propose a re-thinking of Western conceptualizations of truth, orality and gender, talking back to the European center. However, despite the fact one can never be sure of what Rothwell (or any author) meant in this respect, the critic's fluency and dexterity with which he puts Mia Couto's works in dialogue with the West certainly depicts the author more in relation to an international system than to the internal political system within which the establishment of “a” national identity would work. This move could have the quite unintended effect of detaching Mia Couto from the Mozambican national scene, turning him into a valuable re-assessor of Western dichotomies.

Analyzing a corpus that goes from Couto's 1987 *Vozes Anoitecidas* (*Voices Made Night*), out twelve years after the independence, to his 2001 *O Último Vôo do Flamingo* (*The Last Flight of the Flamingo*), nine years after the end of the Mozambican destabilization war, Rothwell's analysis of Couto's use of postmodern aesthetics sees a nationalism too much in line

with the anticolonial moment, and too little connected with the Mozambican postcolonial moment within which those literary works are inscribed. In the words of Rothwell, Mia Couto's "concern is to help develop an independent Mozambican identity" (169), which means an identity that can be seen in its separation from the foreign element and not an identity concerned in dealing with the cultural pluralities present in the country's territory. Despite indicating his awareness of the internal social and political situations of the country at the time of Couto's publications, Rothwell's work does not clearly contemplate the possibility of Couto's reworking of the concepts of truth, orality and gender as a response to his government's problematical political practices, language or gender policies. The concept of "a" national identity is taken for granted and is never the object of analysis, even in the face of the facts, since Rothwell himself mentions in his book both linguistic diversity (42-45) and gender practices (134), for example, as obstacles to such an endeavor by Frelimo. Mozambique's political and military convulsions are in the background, playing the role of a framework of Couto's critique expressed as the appropriation and abrogation of Western concepts. According to Rothwell's bottom line analysis, the political governance of Mozambique is not to blame for the problems of the young nation and Couto, throughout his work, "critiques European interference in Mozambique, and extends [it] to cover the *Eurocentric* Marxist model that oppressed the nation from 1975 under Samora Machel" (171; emphasis added). As we can see here, what is at stake on Rothwell's interpretation of

Couto's work is, almost exclusively, the inside/outside dichotomy – even when Couto's aesthetic choices seem to point towards a contrary direction, rejecting rigid dichotomies. When he chooses to blame European interference and Eurocentric Marxism for oppressing the nation instead of naming Frelimo's doubtful ability to run the country in the years that immediately succeeded independence, Rothwell moves away from a closer evaluation and consequent criticism of Mozambique's internal postcolonial political situation. This thereby justifies the aforementioned criticism by Arenas, who points exactly to the acritical tendencies in the literary criticism of literary studies concerned with Portuguese-speaking Africa.

Nevertheless, it is not our intention here to diminish or undermine Rothwell's reading of Couto's works. In line with de Man's study of the productivity of the analysis of critical works, our point here is “very different from claiming that what the critic says has no immanent connection with the [literary] work, that it is an arbitrary addition or subtraction, or that the gap between his statement and his meaning can be dismissed as mere error” (de Man, 109). The contradiction emerging as a result of Rothwell's critical movement seem to be inherent to his locus of enunciation as a critic. Although his intention appears to be the recuperation of Couto's nationalism as a trope of resistance against globalization's invasive dissolution of borders and localisms, the analysis ends up turning Couto into a reviewer of Western thought to the extent that his work is seen, mostly, in relation to it. Following Paul de Man, critics who, like Rothwell,

“seem curiously doomed to say something quite different from what they meant to say” (105-106), result in doing so because of a “peculiar blindness: their language could grope toward a certain degree of insight only because their method remained oblivious to the perception of this insight” (106). By these means, it is Rothwell’s blindness regarding his own methodology, embedded in the same cultural trait he repudiates, whether in its own use of psychoanalysis or in its very need of globalization as the necessary mediator that allows us to access Couto’s work. This triggers the mismatch between Rothwell’s apparent aim to place Couto at the forefront of the crusade against globalization, and his resulting use of Couto’s work to deconstruct the Western concepts of truth, orality and gender. However, if we keep with de Man and agree that it is precisely through its analysis that a critical text can reveal its utmost productivity, what Rothwell’s reading allows us to see is the significant lack of an analysis of Mia Couto’s works in relation to the internal political situation of Mozambique.

If we return to the Saidian concept of worldiness, we will see that, to the same extent to which Rothwell’s analytical choice might have to do with his place of enunciation as a critic, he is not, nor will he ever be, the only critic whose choice is biased. And before we feel tempted to draw quick conclusions based on the fact that this critic is located in an Anglo-American academic space, it would be worth looking into another example, this time coming from the “South”, for further reflection.

Brazil is another place from which much criticism of African literatures written in Portuguese has been done. Situated across the Atlantic from West-Africa, Brazil was for 322 years part of the same colonial enterprise that connected its history with those of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe. In more than 515 years of history since the arrival of the Portuguese at what is today the surroundings of the Brazilian city of Porto Seguro, in the Northeast of the country, Brazil has been an independent State for less than half of that time so far. As the chosen jewel of the colonial metropolis, Brazil was the colony that most benefitted from investments. This explains why roughly 5 million⁵ black Africans were sent there as slaves to feed the need of labor in the various economic activities undertaken by the Portuguese in the Brazilian colony such as the sugarcane plantations, cocoa plantations or exploitation/extraction/appropriation of gold, silver and diamonds, among other resources. If anyone were to claim that Rothwell's critical bias would be determined by the historical and cultural distance he writes from Mozambique, one would imagine that a Brazilian critique would not go the same way. Would this really be the case?

One of the most respected Brazilian critics, researchers and professors on African Literatures written in Portuguese, Laura Cavalcante

⁵ The website SlaveVoyages.org, developed by researches of the Hutchins Center for African and African American research at the University of Harvard in partnership with universities in Brazil, UK and New Zealand, informs that of 5.848.266 people embarked as slaves in Africa with destination to Brazil, 5.099.816 were disembarked alive in the shores of country.

Padilha, will be the one to give us a flavor of Brazilian critical trends in the study of the literature of Portuguese-speaking Africa. In her 2010 article titled “O Ensino e a Crítica das Literaturas Africanas no Brasil: um Caso de Neocolonialidade e Enfrentamento”, Padilha reflects on 40 years of history of the Brazilian practices of research and teaching of the aforementioned African literatures in Brazil. Starting by providing us with important historical facts connected with the establishment of the bachelor in language and literature in the country, Padilha recalls the inhospitable environment surrounding African literatures in Brazil and its gradual overcoming, with the blooming and expanding of the field from the 1990’s onwards, whose drive is defined by the critic:

. . . pela tentativa de, por um viés transdisciplinar, tornarem-se mais visíveis alguns recessos da cultura nacional - , nós, estudiosos, *acreditamos estar contribuindo para a reversão da opacidade por tanto tempo existente. Só assim cremos ser possível mudar o contorno da imagem de nossa distorcida face projetada no espelho da história, espelho em que, por muito tempo se elidiu a pluralidade do sujeito nacional*, pelo fato mesmo de que a contribuição simbólica dos primeiros habitantes da terra e dos que para cá vieram como escravos

foi sempre considerada, sumariamente, de menor ou quase nenhuma importância.⁶ (6; emphasis added)

Imbued with such a drive, Padilha reports that the Brazilian critic works as a translator whose aim is “trazer, à cena contemporânea, as tradições que sempre foram apagadas e/ou se apresentavam como incompreensivelmente exóticas ou diferentes, no olhar dos agentes do vetor considerado alto, da cultura brasileira”⁷ (7). Looking for a re-connection with Africa, the critic wishes “tornar mais visíveis ‘o significante’ e a ‘metáfora’ que a África representa, na busca de construir o que Santos e Nunes chamam de ‘novas fronteiras de solidariedade’ ”⁸(9) in a movement which reflects the search “através da construção literária e cultural que as produções artístico-verbais africanas acabam por nos oferecer, das ‘rotas’ que, ao fim e ao cabo, subsistiam, como afirma o teórico jamaicano [Stuart Hall] ‘no interior de complexas configurações’ de nossa própria cultura”⁹ (9-10).

⁶ through the transdisciplinary attempt to make some recesses of national culture more visible –, we, the researchers, believe to be contributing to reverse the opacity that exists for so long. *We believe this is the only way to change the contour of our distorted face projected onto to mirror of history, mirror onto which, for a long time the plurality of the national subject was elided*, due to the fact that the symbolic contribution of the first inhabitants of this land and of those who came here as slaves was always considered, summarily, of lesser or almost no importance.

⁷ “to bring, to contemporaneity, traditions which were always erased and/or seen as incomprehensibly exotic or different, in the eyes of the agents of Brazilian high cultural scene”

⁸ “to make visible the ‘signifier’ and the ‘metaphor’ represented by Africa, seeking to construct that which Santos and Nunes call ‘new frontiers of solidarity’”

⁹ “though the cultural and literary construct that African verbally artistic productions offer, of the ‘roots’ which, in the end, remained, as stated the Jamaican theoretician [Stuart Hall] ‘within complex configurations’ of our own culture”

According to the coordinates given by Padilha, we can see that, in searching for Africa, the Brazilian critique proposes to de-center and dis-occidentalize the notions of literary canon in the country. Having the research on Africa as an attempt to confront Brazil's strongly neocolonial cultural heritage – expressed by the critic already in the title of her article by “um caso de neocolonialidade e enfrentamento”¹⁰ –, Padilha's concern with this field not only points to the Global South, but to the subaltern Global South, with an aim to change the geographies and displace hegemonic notions of cultural and artistic value. Additionally, the political drive of such a critique clearly addresses the very pungent socio-economic problem of racism in Brazil. Even though Brazil sells worldwide an image of racial democracy, the 2008 Census reveals that for 63.7% of the population, color or race are still factors of influence in their everyday life. Moreover, if we take the 2010 census into account which, for the first time in history, reports the number of people declaring themselves as non-whites as bigger than that declaring themselves as whites – 52.3% non-whites (43.1% of which is “*parda*”[brown], 7.6% black, 1.1% “yellow” and 0.5% indigenous) versus 47.7% of whites – the sad condition of material poverty, spiced by high indexes of misery, to which the black population in Brazil is condemned is hard evidence of the subaltern connotation of African heritage in Brazilian culture.

¹⁰ “a matter of coloniality and confrontation”

However, the political inclination aiming for a change in Brazilian society shows that a critique in line with Padilha's view turns out to be centered on its own identitarian needs. If we go back to the evoked metaphor in which the search for Africa serves the Brazilian aim in changing its own distorted image projected in the mirror of history, a distortion that refers to the obliteration of the black as an important component of Brazil's own identity, we are reminded of Lacan in his "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I" essay. According to the French psychoanalyst, the mirror stage is the first stage of identification of the subject, resulting from the process in which the subject identifies itself with the image of their whole body reflected in the mirror. Lacan also remarks that the mirror stage is just an initial step in a larger process of identification of the subject, occurring very early at the child's development (between the age of 6 and 18 months), and it is an intrinsically individual process in which the other is merely the child's own image – what Lacan calls *imago*. This means that, at the mirror stage, "the I is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other" (2). With that in mind, looking for Africa to reinforce its own identitarian needs would not put the Brazilian approach much further apart from Rothwell's to the extent in which it also talks back to the social urgencies of the place of enunciation of the critic rather than to the literary contexts of emergency. If the approach that Padilha reports is indeed connected with the Lacanian mirror stage of the Brazilian psyche, as she

points out throughout her text, and as Lacan himself reminds us, this is a stage of identification that does not consider a relation with the other, meaning that it does not contemplate Africa in its alterity.

Rothwell's analysis of Mia Couto's works ends up not addressing the possible critical relations those works could establish with Mozambique's internal political affairs in order not to defeat his purpose of maintaining nationalism as a "refuge" – even though "weak" – to fight globalization. Similarly, Padilha's choice, resonating with the "mirror stage" in her commitment to the creation of a positive image of black heritage in Brazil, betrays her own declared desire to look for Africa because it does not relate to it in its alterity. Such an approach, which aims at accessing an "other who is in us", invades the alterity of the African other by giving it relevance only as a component of Brazilian identity. Although different from the colonial process of othering in nature, this view still shares its procedure. While the classic type of colonial othering sought to mark a hierarchical separation between colonizer "Other" and colonized "other", Padilha's view takes the African cultural element "other" to legitimize blackness in a Brazilian cultural identity conceived as "Other" revealing her slippage into the very logic she appears to contest ¹¹.

¹¹ A thought-provoking discussion on the (in)utility of the concept of other in the light of both practices of colonial otherness and philosophical attempts to bear the other in mind in its alterity have been drawn recently by Robert J. C. Young on his essay "Postcolonial Remains".

The conceptualization of the other's alterity has been central to 20th Century philosophy. Brought up by Derrida in *Writing and Difference*, Levinas' relations with Husserl and Heidegger's ideas about the other are criticized and supplemented in what came to be worked on his own ideas of other (*l'autre*) throughout his later works. Derrida's conceptualization can be seen as moving away from Levinas' thought of a divinely absolute Other (*Autrui*) which, in its unreachability, "increases the neutrality of the other" (130), making it unsuitable for the play – according to the Derridan concept of play (*jeu*)– through which other people and other things would signify. He minds Levinas' concern with alterity though, whose expression he also sees in the Husserlian concept of alter ego. Even though establishing a relation of symmetry between the "I" and the "other", Husserl's proposal preserves alterity once it implies "an ego which I know *to be in relation to me as to an other*" (15; emphasis added). To think of the other as alter ego, in its unreachable sameness brought about by the impossibility of any consubstantiation with the other, becomes key to the play through which the other can, asymmetrically – to the extent that the Derridian relation between opposites is always hierarchical –, signify.

With such conceptualization of alterity in mind, we could imply that the purpose of the study of Africa described by Padilha denies the symmetry between the "I" and the "other" to the extent it regards the "other" only as within the "I". This leads us to a problematic situation: once they are not similar in their alterity and do not relate to each other as other, both the

Brazilian and the African element can never define each other, neither in terms of the synthetically Hegelian *aufhebung* nor the oppositional Derridian *différance*. And again, evoking Paul de Man, we can observe that what Padilha described bears a blindness towards its own methodology, which defeats the purpose of her study to the extent that it does not really imply the knowledge of Africa as other – by only focusing on its sameness, not its difference. By not doing so, it refutes the possibility for the Brazilian identity to define itself either in terms of synthesis with or in opposition to Africa, ending up, as has termed de Man, doing something quite different from what she meant. In its insight, Padilha's approach enables us to recuperate the importance of alterity, as very well remarked by Rita Chaves in her own reflection on the study of African literatures written in Portuguese produced in Brazil titled "A Pesquisa em Torno das Literaturas Africanas: Pontos para um Balanço":

Acabo, nesse momento, de tocar num outro aspecto que me parece essencial: a nossa condição de estrangeiro, ou melhor, a importância de não perdemos de vista, ao lidarmos com esses textos, que estamos diante de uma literatura que não é nossa. E, nesse ponto, contrariando algumas correntes, ousou arriscar que a língua portuguesa pode ser um complicador. Porque ela nos dá a ilusão de que estamos perante uma situação muito familiar. Muitas convergências existem, muitos laços nos unem, e creio que, como todos que têm a

África como tema, eu desejo vê-los apertados; no entanto, acho que a viabilidade desse desejo depende também da consciência serena das nossas diferenças.¹² (9; emphasis added)

In the end, what both Rothwell and Padilha's critical receptions of African literary texts show is that the critique of Arenas is valid to the degree that both critical positions are silent when it comes to an observation of the literary works in their potential critical responses to their socio-political national contexts of emergence. Such blindness, however, does not come from any lack of ability of any of those critics, coming rather from its political engagement with their own places of enunciation. Going back to Said and his proposition for a criticism that is worldly (*The World, the Text, and the Critic* 35), committed to the society in which it is inserted to which it speaks, we can see that their overzealousness is the only thing that could be termed as a sin. If what the critic does is not only "to *begin* to create the values by which art is judged" but also to "embody in writing the processes and actual conditions in the *present* by means of which art and writing bear significance" (Said, *Beginnings* 52-53), we can say that both critics engage very productively with the present of the actual conditions of their places of

¹² "I have just touched upon another aspect which seems essential to me: our foreign condition, or yet, the importance of not forgetting, when dealing with these texts, that we are facing a literature that is not ours. And here, going against certain currents of thought, I dare say that the Portuguese language can be a problem. Because it gives us the illusion of a very similar situation. There are certainly many convergences, we are united by many ties, and I believe that, just like all those who work on Africa, I wish to see those ties tightened; however, I believe that the viability of this wish also depends on the serene awareness of our differences"

enunciation. As Phillip Rothwell criticizes the current hegemonic model in which the West explains the rest, by using Couto's work as a supplementary discourse to Western thought, he engages actively with the political discourse of his own Anglo-American space, both by challenging the hegemonic unidirectional flows of thought from an active North to a passive South, and by offering routes of resistance to globalization, the moving force in the realm of the capital that perpetuated the unidirectionality of those flows. Padilha, in her turn, works with similar political engagement with Brazil's socio-economic problems to the point she openly addresses, in an active way, the country's racial problems reflected by the oblivion affecting the black as a valuable historical agent and, at the same time, proposes an epistemological de-centering of a culture historically addicted in its movement towards the West.

On the other hand, coming back to Paul de Man's proposition of critical blindness as the necessary condition to critical insight, it is important to look at what these critical works' lack if we are to come to terms with our own worldly engagement with foreign critical discourse in the field of African literatures written in Portuguese. A critic's blindness, according to de Man

can take on the form of a recurrently aberrant pattern of interpretation with regard to a particular writer. The pattern extends from highly specialized commentators to the vague *idées reçues* by means of which this writer is identified and

classified in general histories of literature. It can even include other writers who have been influenced by him. (111)

In that sense, rather than reproduce perspectives, our aim in this study is to challenge them in so far as they can be supplemented. De Man's proposition helps us to understand Arena's commentary denoting the observation of a pattern of avoidance in terms of critical engagement with the political situation of the postcolonial states in question. Since the analysis of these literature's works specifically in relation to their internal situation constitutes the core of this study, we can say that this work *comes from* and *is in relation* to this same criticism from which we get the insight and strength to depart.

1.1. The postcolony/al: from between States to within States

Most of the foreign criticism of the African literatures written in Portuguese is made with the help of postcolonial theory. Embedded in a field which came to be known as postcolonial studies, almost every book, article or essay on postcolonialism comes supplied with a "clarifying" genealogy of the field¹³. Although most of the definitions come with the

¹³ Stuart Hall on his essay "When was the postcolonial? Thinking at the limit" summarizes well the discussion around the term "post-colonial" as it was posed by scholars such as Ella Shohat, Anne McClintock and Arif Dirlik at the early 1990's. Recent refashions of the discussions can be seen in "What postcolonialism doesn't say" by Neil Lazarus, "Postcolonial remains" by Robert Young, by Benita Parry's "What is left in postcolonial studies?", Ella Shohat e Robert Stam "Whence and whither postcolonial theory" and Timonhy Brennan's *Borrowed Light*.

interesting disclaimer stating that the field cannot be circumscribed within the genealogies given, most of them locate the roots of postcolonial thought in the post-World War II decolonization wave of British colonies, and locate its condensation as a field recognized under the “postcolonial” rubric from the 1970’s. There are even those who would declare its beginning with the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* in 1978¹⁴ – and set its institutionalization in the Anglo-American academy in the 1980’s –, and there are some who would refer to the moment “when Third World intellectuals have arrived in First World academe” (Dirlik, “Third World Criticism” 329). Interestingly enough, even though the line of thought in the field is often said to be heavily marked by poststructuralism, postcolonial studies seems unable to deny its Marxist descent expressed by its everlasting need for historicity, beginning with its own.

With time, however, it has become clear that genealogies dialogue, in one way or another, with the place of enunciation of the critic which will always serve as a filter, often to justify the attack rather than to make a critique, of her/his work. It is for this reason that accepting Derrida’s advice and beginning wherever we are is seen here as the best way to take off, since we believe that, given the vastness of both territories and phenomena it concerns, any genealogy of postcolonial studies is nothing but fiction. As Shohat and Stam recently stated:

¹⁴ Such as Ana Mafalda Leite’s *Literaturas Africanas e Formações Pós-coloniais* and Aschroft et al’s *The Empire Writes Back*.

we should see it [Postcolonial Studies] as a potentially polycentric and open-ended discourse to be defined from multiple sites and perspectives. Our key argument about the multidirectionalities of ideas is that the Postcolonial project and similar projects emerge out of many, many contexts. There are so many antecedents alongside the usual postcolonial triad of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak. Important as they are, we have to remember figures like Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire [and Almícar Cabral]. (“Brazil is not traveling enough” 18)¹⁵

Therefore, since any idea of genealogy is not only doomed to incompleteness, but also to reproduce the incompleteness of which it is a product and consequently to perpetuate current forms of epistemological subalternity and exclusion, we shall begin from where we are, which means to review and understand the ways in which postcolonial bodies of theory constitute in themselves obstacles to the observation of internal political critique of literary works from the postcolony.

When it comes to critics occupied with Portuguese-speaking Africa, the relations with postcolonial theory can be seen as markedly influenced by the hierarchical position of the critic’s place of enunciation in the global market of epistemologies. While the critique coming from English-speaking

¹⁵ On this interview, Shohat and Stam discuss at length other places of enunciation of critical reflections on the postcolonial as well as the enduring tendency to trace its beginning to what has been called the “Anglo-Saxon” academe.

spaces shows little resistance to the theoretical corpus available, as Shohat and Stam point out very well, the “Latins” represented here by Portugal and Brazil tend to receive an “Anglo-Saxon” postcolonial theory with distrust (13). When it comes to the Portuguese critique, besides being very well informed of what is published in the English-speaking world, it tends to highlight its need to drift away from Anglo-American academic theories, based on British postcolonial experiences, expressing the need for local theories able to deal with the exceptionality of Portuguese colonialism, a project that has been long embraced by Boaventura de Sousa Santos and has taken the shape of *Epistemologias do Sul*¹⁶. When it comes to Brazilian critics, the point made by the Portuguese is usually taken into consideration and reinforced by a sense of belonging to Latin America, which adds to their idea of the theoretical body, and Boaventura de Sousa Santos is joined by local flavors such as Silviano Santiago, Antonio Cândido, Roberto Schwarz and Walter Mignolo along with the widespread Anglophone canonical counterparts Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. Precisely because it is performed from a postcolonial perspective, foreign literary criticism of African literatures written in Portuguese tends not to turn a blind eye to the epistemological hierarchy of the North towards the South, for it reenacts the same dominant logic of the colonial practices that this form of criticism is committed to contest.

¹⁶ Initially elaborated on Boaventura de Sousa Santos’ *Toward a New Common Sense: Law, Science and Politics in the Paradigmatic Transition*, the concept of “epistemologias do sul” (Southern epistemologies) was the theme of an eponymous book organized by Maria Paula Meneses and Santos.

But when combat is engraved in the very heart of postcolonial criticism, how does one account for a tendency to acritical positions towards the contemporary postcolonial political situations of postcolonial Portuguese-speaking Africa, as pointed out by Arenas? In an interview given in 2008, when asked about postcolonial memory, Achille Mbembe made an interesting distinction between “thinking about the postcolony” and “postcolonial thought”

In many respects my book [*On the Postcolony*] adopts a different approach from that of most postcolonial thinking, if only over the privileged position accorded by the latter to questions of identity and difference, and over the central role that the theme of resistance plays in it. *There is a difference, to my mind, between thinking about the "postcolony" and "postcolonial" thought.* The question running through my book is this: "What is 'today', and what are we, today?" What are the lines of fragility, the lines of precariousness, the fissures in contemporary African life? And, possibly, how could what is, be no more, how could it give birth to something else? And so, if you like, it's a way of reflecting on the fractures, on what remains of the promise of life when the enemy is no longer the colonist in a strict sense, but the "brother"? So the book is a critique of the African discourse

on community and brotherhood. (“What is postcolonial thinking?” 11; emphasis added)

It is clear that for Mbembe, there is a disjuncture between the postcolony as a space and postcolonial thought as an epistemological practice. According to his perspective, while the latter demands a concern with contemporary African political realities, the former is a

product of the encounter between Europe and the worlds it once made into its distant possessions It calls upon Europe to live what it declares to be its origins, its future and its promise, and to live all that responsibly . . . postcolonial thought calls upon Europe to open and continually relaunch that future in a singular fashion, responsible for itself, for the Other, and before the Other. (11)

Although Mbembe’s statement sets the stage for a variety of questions – including whether it would be fair to reduce postcolonial thought to European sense of responsibility for the Other that continues colonial practices –, for the moment, and according to the pertinence of our object, we could ask ourselves whether Mbembe is right in his distinction and therefore whether postcolonial thought would be enough to understand the social materiality of the postcolony. Such a play on words that sounds at first like an oxymoron may not be absurd at all, and thinking of its pertinence is the only way for any tentative answers.

1.2. *Between inter- and intra- national dimensions*

Although the term colony is not a recent concept nor is the existence of ex-colonies once we take into account American independence in 1776, as the abovementioned genealogies of the term show, postcolony as a term is a product of the late 20th Century. In contrast to the decolonization wave that started in the Americas in the 18th and 19th Century, the decolonization wave following post-World War II came along with anticolonial nationalism. Besides the fact that nationalism is a widely studied phenomenon, the majority of what is done comprises the nationalism responsible for the European processes of national unification. This leaves aside a more detailed study of the socio-ideological movements which brought independence to the Americas, shaking the basis of the British, French, Spanish and Portuguese colonial empires¹⁷; an epistemological move that is quite questionable and scarcely innocent. Differently from the nationalisms of the Americas, although similarly subaltern if compared to the attention given to European ones, more can be found about the study of the nationalistic wave that led the postwar world into decolonization. Despite the fact it tends to be seen, in a generalized way, as European derivative practice movement – given that it had European colonialism as a common enemy –, anticolonial nationalism happened in diverse ways, both as a response to the specific contexts in which they emerged and a means to

¹⁷ Interesting reflections about the academic neglect of nationalism in the Americas is found in Doyle and Pamplona's *Nationalism in the New World*.

face the specific challenges colonialism put to them. Robert Young, for example, makes a clear distinction between what he calls “colonial nationalism”, as it happened in India, and “Marxist internationalism with armed national liberation movements”, as happened in Angola and Mozambique. However, despite its differences, the just as colonialism puts those movements together, it is also important to state that “[h]istorically, postcolonial theory is the product of all these [forms of anticolonial nationalism]” (*Postcolonialism* 166).

Prior to the political entity of the postcolony, anticolonial thought is a counter-ideology in relation to colonialism. As the works of Fanon and Cabral show, way before Said, Spivak or Bhabha, the basis of what is currently known as “postcolonial theory” was forged within anticolonial struggles as the intellectual weapon of counter-attack to colonialism. And if on one hand anticolonial consciousness has helped to forge the postcolony, its very connection with the armed movements within which it emerged can be regarded as one of the main reasons for its apparent inadequacy to handle the current postcolony. Given that it rests upon the nationalistic principle that rejects the domination of one nation, or even a group of different nations, by an alien dominating one, which is reflected by the fight against the advance of global capitalism through the practice of colonialism inherited from the anticolonial thought, postcolonial theory was born much more prepared to deal with the international agenda of its time. In this sense, as a body of theory, postcolonial studies have evolved better equipped to

handle relations *between* states rather than *within* states, endorsing Mbembe's perspective. Such seems to be the heritage of a current of thought conceived by the clash between *inter*-national capitalism and *inter*-national Marxism: the *intra*-national dimension of these struggles is often regarded as redundant.

The inability of postcolonial criticism to go *intra*-national has been slowly addressed over the last decade, as history marches on and the contradictions of anticolonial nationalism condense into political and economically problematic postcolonial realities. As Arif Dirlik puts it:

[i]n many ways, contemporary postcolonial criticism is most important as a reflection on the history of postcolonial discourse (a self-criticism of the discourse, in other words), bringing to the same surface contradictions that were rendered invisible earlier by barely examined and fundamentally teleological assumptions concerning capitalism, socialism and the nation, but above all revolutionary national liberation movements against colonialism – the failure of which has done much to provoke an awareness of these contradictions. (“Rethinking Colonialism” 432)

Those contradictions, termed by Dirlik also as “[t]he tragedy of anticolonial revolutionary nationalism” (437), are of special interest to us as they

encompass the contradictions of the very kind of nationalism that set forth the independence and constituted the governments in each of the five Portuguese-speaking African countries. Still according to Dirlik, the most contradictory aspect of anticolonial revolutionary nationalism was nation-building. Since the anticolonial aim to liberate the colonial spaces and to constitute sovereign nations was the very result of colonial intervention – as the boundaries of the new states were based on those of the colonies whose drawing was made taking into account European interests and not the cohesion of cultural groups within it, as is widely known –, “what were the consequences of their imaginings for the populations that colonialism had gathered under its administrative aegis, which they now sought to make into a nation? Is it possible that they would end up as colonialist themselves where these populations were concerned?” (437).

The points made by Dirlik endorse, at least in part, the critical perspective of Mbembe. While we might not entirely agree with Mbembe’s assertion that postcolonial thought is only concerned with a European agency towards its other¹⁸, where we also keep in mind that much of the seminal thought in what came to be later recognized as postcolonial studies has been actively done by non-Europeans, we feel compelled to accept that it is a product of interaction with European intervention, whose inheritance has proved itself, in the long run of history, irremediable. On the other hand,

¹⁸ Mbembe’s usage the words other and Other is in line with the definition of Lacan that implies an relationship of inequality and subordination.

just as with history, postcolonial studies marches on and, as pointed out by Dirlik, follows in constant reorientation and self-criticism, which might lead us to disagree with Mbembe's inferred proposition of the inadequacy of postcolonial thought to understand the contemporary dynamic of the postcolony. Once *postcolonial* is an adverbial mode born from the interaction with colonialism as an ideological basis for the fight against it, so is the postcolony, the ideology's ultimate goal, and a term that Mbembe does not refuse to employ even when his aim is to talk about what could be termed as "African States which were once colonies of European States".

What the mismatch between postcolonial thought and postcolony claimed by Mbembe shows is, nonetheless, an echo of the constant genealogical problem aforementioned that both frames and fuels much of the discussion in relation to postcolonial theory. The fact that postcolonial thought, and with it postcolonial consciousness, happened to be widespread via the US academe at a time of US hegemonic power keeps obfuscating its non-linear, multidirectional loci of emergence, as pointed out by Shohat and Stam. The apparently contradictory and, in the eyes of many, suspicious fact that a body of theory designed to understand inequalities of the capitalist world-system raises precisely from the hegemonic center of capital is intrinsically problematic. Therefore, views of the field which do not considerate the inherent ambivalence of a body of theory devised in the center, but destined to understand modes of expression of the peripheries it creates are more likely to reject it. They often reduce what has been

produced theoretically under the aegis of postcolonial as apolitical, and see it as likely to reiterate the very power structures underlying the colonial discourse it sets out to critique. Such awareness, however, is essential to the self-criticism necessary in the development of postcolonial perspectives through time, and it can only constitute a failure when it becomes an agenda. One must be aware that the insistent focus on a UK or US-based centrality of the field widens the inequality it sets out to address by ignoring the political validity of whatever is being produced, either geographically or temporally, around it. It is vital that the critic be sufficiently careful in order to avoid mixing the necessary critique of certain works, trends and thinkers with the discrediting of a whole current of thought.

As Robert Young argues, postcolonial theory can still be useful to address inequality in situations striking the world in the 21st Century. Taking up the challenge of the *intra* on his article “Postcolonial Remains” (2012), Young shows how the postcolonial eye remains operative in making the invisible visible. As Young argues, as a postcolonial body of theory born from the heart of anticolonial movements, conjugated with its diversity-oriented perspective and emerging from the very non-European cultures it engaged with, postcolonial reason is extremely transferrable. For this reason, nowadays, its political and cultural-oriented awareness have been deemed useful in addressing the case of indigenous struggles against

sovereign states¹⁹, as Stam and Shohat elaborate in their response to Young's essay titled "Whence and Whither Postcolonial Theory". Challenging postcolonialism's own Marxist rules of secularism and modernity, the case of indigenous struggles also demands a critique of colonial practices perpetrated by postcolonial states, insofar as they subalternize cultures and dispossess properties in the name of sovereignty and economic advantage in global capitalism. Thus, accepting Said's advice, we can see that what those critics propose reflects an "awareness of the resistances to theory, [and] reactions to it elicited by those concrete experiences or interpretations with which it is in conflict" (*The World* 242).

In the case of the postcolonial critic of African literatures written in Portuguese, and as we hope the previous discussion on its criticism helps us to show, what we can see is a lasting preference for the *inter* in detriment of the *intra*. Such a preference, however, shows itself much more indebted to a commitment to the Marxist revolutionary aspects of the anticolonial struggle that shaped the first awareness of postcolonial thought, rather than to later unfolding events connected, as shown by Dirlik, Stam, Shohat and Young, with the tendency of the field, to "continu[e] in the necessary mode of perpetual autocritique" (Young, "Postcolonial Remains" 22). In this sense, it is possible to affirm that the avoidance of a politically critical position on the current critique of the literatures of Portuguese-speaking Africa comes

¹⁹ See Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's *Race in Translation: Cultural Wars around the Postcolonial Atlantic*.

precisely from its postcolonial engagement with the contradictory processes of nation-building that were at the heart of the revolutionary anticolonial nationalism that freed those states from colonial rule.

To evoke the Marxist orientation of the anticolonial struggle is to remember that “[i]f postcolonial theory is the cultural product of decolonization, it is also the historical product of Marxism in the anti-colonial arena” (Young, *Postcolonialism* 168). With the vantage point of historical distance, we can see that on behalf of nation-building, revolutionary anticolonialism used the same logic of appropriation of weapons of violence used by the colonial enterprise, being “condemned almost from the beginning to replicate the practices of the colonialists in their very efforts at nation-building”, a process that had to be “sufficient[ly] unified to struggle against colonialism and withstand its pressures, which meant in practice puritanical intolerance of any sign of disunity or less centrist and integrationist views of the nation” (Dirlik, ‘Rethinking Colonialism’⁴³⁷). The realm of culture, which was one of the most important elements in the building of the national consciousness during the nationalist movements of the Portuguese-speaking countries, became a field of dispute and a site that could provide a privileged view of how the systematic promotion of cultural homogenization was a necessary part of the fight against imperialism. According to Almícar Cabral:

Seja qual for a complexidade desse panorama cultural, o movimento de libertação tem necessidade de nele localizar e

definir os dados contraditórios para preservar os valores positivos, efetuar a confluência desses valores no sentido da luta e no âmbito de uma nova dimensão – a *dimensão nacional*

Qualquer que seja a sua forma, a luta exige a mobilização e a organização de uma maioria significativa da população, a unidade política e moral das diversas categorias sociais, a liquidação progressiva dos vestígios da mentalidade tribal e feudal, a recusa das regras e dos tabus sociais e religiosos incompatíveis com o caráter *racional* e nacional do movimento de libertação e opera ainda muitas outras modificações profundas na vida das populações²⁰ (Cabral, “O Papel da Cultura” 230-231; emphasis in the original)

As we can see, despite the revolutionary anticolonial nationalist movements in Portuguese-speaking Africa’ valuation of local culture, the need to use culture as a tool for national cohesion demanded a selection among the traditional cultural practices, thereby privileging only those that served the purpose of the fight against colonialism. Such a selection, combined with the Marxist values and morals of modernity, was the basis of

²⁰ Whatever the complexity of the cultural panorama, the liberation movement needs to find its contradictions in order to preserve its positive values, to conflate these values with the struggle and towards a new dimension – *the national dimension* / Whatever its form, the struggle demands the mobilization and the organization of a significant majority of its population, the political and moral unity of the many social categories, the progressive liquidation of remains of tribal and feudal mentalities, the refutation of rules and social taboos incompatible with the *rational* and national character of the national liberation movement and to promote yet many other deep changes on the lives of the populations.”

a cultural dialectics whose aim was a synthesis of national identity. To think that the implantation process of national colonialism was either gentle or non-problematical is nothing but wishful thinking that only sees half of the truth – which ends up building much of the political drive that animates the foreign reception of the literary works coming from those independent countries. As Dirlik wisely states “Fanon, like many others [such as Cabral], ignored that those masses, in particular the peasantry, might be the most averse of all to the homogenizing urges of nationalism” (“Rethinking Colonialism” 437).

If we could previously discuss the impact of a critic’s worldiness on the reception of a literary work, to the extent that it influences the ways in which the critic unveils the work’s significant aspects to the society in which he is inserted, here we can see another dimension of the critic’s worldiness, very common to the postcolonial critic, which rests on the role of the critic’s political engagement with the place of enunciation in which the literary work is inserted. In its commitment to make the invisible visible, the foreign postcolonial critic will be prone to contribute to the construction of those African national identities, working in the realm of the cultural gateway that is the academy from which s/he endorses and promotes those cultures and their achievements. From this perspective, we can clearly see reasons why a critic would not be willing to read a literary work in its most critical *intra*-national potentialities, or to look too closely at the peasants’ cultural suppression on behalf of a postcolonial national identity. As the

critic's political view is committed to the very political aims of the governors in place, literary displays of discontent or unrest, which could serve as arguments for those interested in undermining the anticolonial achievements in the international arena, can be easily swept under the carpet, always for the greater good.

Returning to the examples offered by Rothwell and Padilha, we can clearly see their engagement as postcolonial critics not only by the treatment they give to the literatures they analyze, reading it most productively in relation to their place of enunciation, but also by engaging politically with the literature's places of emergence to the extent that both subscribe to the revolutionary duty to build those nations through culture. While Rothwell prefers to draw his analysis of the works of Mia Couto disregarding, almost completely, its potential critique of the Mozambican postcolonial State, or even the very idea of national identity, he ends up suggesting that there is, in fact, an image of national identity developed throughout the writer's work. For this critic, the writer's "postcolonial maturity" was reached with a novel whose plot focused on the interventionist policy of international organs such as the United Nations, and showed that the fight against imperialism had not ended with the end of colonialism. Different from what we read in Mbembe, the bottom line for Rothwell seems to be that the postcolony is still striving to build up its identity as an opposition to what comes from outside. Hence, the focus on the *inter-*, in the face of which an untroubled condensation of the *intra-* national would be possible. Padilha, in her turn, also subscribes to

a conciliatory view of Africa, giving preference to highlighting its points of connection with Brazil rather than to problematizing the plurality of its cultures and different literary systems. Again on the realm of the *inter*, as well as with the aim of identity-building through opposition with a foreign element – focusing, this time, on Brazil –, Padilha gives the idea of an African unification and/within tradition that is necessary to the dialectical process of identity-building in Brazil. The idea of African countries that are united, strong and beautiful enough to be valued as an element of Brazil's national culture²¹ is, therefore, essential. Here, Padilha's search for synthesis is in line with a left that is not only of revolutionary anticolonial aim, but also one which is very entrenched in the Brazilian academic view. As Antonio Candido's case of "sequestro do barroco"²² shows, the mainstream literary critique in Brazil is very well used to the ideologically-

²¹ An interesting reflection on Brazilian's dialectic/anthropophagic process of cultural identity building can be found in Bernard McGuirk's "Laughing Again he's Awake: de Campos à l'oreille de l'autre celté" in Bernard McGuirk and Else Vieira's *Haroldo de Campos in Conversation*.

²² "O sequestro do barroco" ("The kidnap of the baroque") is a curtailment of the book *O sequestro do barroco na formação da literatura brasileira: o caso Gregório de Matos* by the Brazilian poet and critic Haroldo de Campos, and refers to an unresolved polemic in Brazilian literary studies. In his 1989 text, Campos sets out to critique Antonio Candido, arguably the most important literary theorist of the country to date, for not have included the baroque works by Gregório de Matos (1636-1696) on his *magnum opus* *Formação da Literatura Brasileira* (1959). Candido's argument was that Matos works' were not included on his idea of the country's literary system because in the 17th Century, Brazilian literature still did not have a system in place, with producers and consumers of literature capable of assuring Matos's influence in the system's posterity. Campos, on his turn, denounces Candido's exclusion of Matos as a signal that Candido's idea of formation of a literary system was but a prescriptive theoretical construct willing to exclude or include anything that would prove its logic. The polemic, which remains unresolved, constitutes a good example of the discussion around literature and national identity in Brazil that is important for the understanding of the positioning of many of its critics.

oriented construction of a literary system that can show enough cohesion to portray the country's national identity.

To point out the problematic politics of nation-building generated within revolutionary anticolonial movements and employed by the postcolonial political regimes does not mean to disregard or to diminish the importance of those movements or the greatness of their achievements, without which neither the world we know nowadays, nor the very possibility of this reflection, would exist. In common with Stam, Shohat and Young, who propose the opening of postcolonial theory towards the indigenous claims, we too believe that it is the critic's job to resist theory, stretch it, put it to the test of different possible dimensions, and then tear it, open it, criticize and adapt it to the very social materiality – to the very worldiness – of the context of emergence of literature too. To look at the contradictions of nation-building in African literature written in Portuguese does not weaken it. To take up the challenge of going *intra* does not disrupt nation-building; it continues it.

1.3. Intra-colonialism: praxis of postcolonial times

“[U]ma teoria não é um simples aparelho conceptual e muito menos um corpo doutrinal ou um conjunto de princípios metodológicos, cabe-lhe, sim, ocupar o espaço crítico da desestabilização da *doxa* estabelecida e do questionamento das aparentes evidências do

senso comum. E cabe-lhe, do mesmo passo, construir uma metalinguagem que permita articular uma permanente perspectivação interrogativa do seu campo de incidência. Essa metalinguagem, evidentemente, não surge a partir do nada, constrói-se a partir da ressignificação de conceitos geralmente pré-existentes cuja operatividade no novo contexto teórico e no novo campo discursivo está na medida exacta da sua capacidade de alargar e definir o espaço da interrogação.²³ ”

António Sousa Ribeiro,
 “Vítimas do Próprio Sucesso? Lugares
 Comuns do Pós-Colonial”

Our aim to go *intra* and to analyze the ways in which identity building is portrayed in 21st Century African literary works written in Portuguese also demands a critical look at the postcolony. The concept of postcolony, as proposed here, follows the definition of Achille Mbembe, to whom the African “postcolony” means age and a *durée*. According to this theoretician:

By age, is meant not a simple category of time but a number of relationships and a configuration of events As an age, the postcolony encloses multiples *durées* made up of

²³ “A theory is not only a conceptual apparatus, even less a doctrine or a group of methodological principles, its duty is, in fact, to exercise a critique that destabilize the established *doxa* and to question apparent evidences of common sense. It is its duty to construct a metalanguage that allows the articulation of permanent interrogation of its field. Such metalanguage, evidently, does not come out of nowhere, is it built from the resignification of generally pre-existing concepts whose operability in the new theoretical context and in the new discursive field is proportional to its ability to enlarge and define the space of interrogation”

discontinuities, reversals, inertias, and swings that overlay one another, interpenetrate one another, and develop one another: an *entanglement*. (*On the Postcolony* 14)

On his defiant challenge to linear historicity, Mbembe proposes the abandoning of a Eurocentric idea of linear time in which the present necessarily derives from the past and engenders the future. He argues for an idea of postcolony more suitable to African social formations, thus representing a “time of existence and experience, a time entanglement” once that

[African social formations] harbor the possibility of a variety of trajectories neither convergent nor divergent, but interlocked, paradoxical. More philosophically, it may be supposed that the present as *experience of a time* is precisely that moment when different forms of absence become mixed together: absence of those presences that are no longer so and that one remembers (the past), and the absence of those other that are yet to come and are anticipated (the future). (16; emphasis in the original)

To see the postcolony as an age of entangled temporality shows itself as an interesting point of convergence that addresses much of the criticism directed towards the “postcolonial” as a terminology. Without ignoring its relation to “colony”, both in its historical, cultural and material aspects,

Mbembe recuperates the “postcolony” from a fallacious conceptualization of overcoming the colonial that was, and still is, at the heart of the discussion around the validity of the postcolonial over the last twenty years in the international arena: the (in)famous idea that the postcolonial implies the end of, or the rupture with, the colonial. While for those concerned with the relevance of colonialism for capitalist world-system relations, the *post* of postcolonial would imply an apolitical movement beyond colonialism (Shohat, “Notes on the ‘Post-colonial’ ”101), for many interested in the development of the sovereign African states which emerged from colonialism, independence brought the beginning of a political new era in which the birth of the “[h]omem novo, plenamente consciente dos seus direitos e deveres nacionais, continentais e internacionais”²⁴ (Cabral, “A Arma da Teoria” 170) would take place. In the face of this scenario, although Mbembe’s formulation does not entirely dispense with the novelty inherent in the term, by emphasizing the lingering of colonial practices as constitutive of postcolonial times, he readapts the “weapon of theory” for going *intra*. Something that certainly would not go down well for anyone interested in inaugurating new beginnings within the postcolony, to think of continuations might not be so convenient given that “keeping alive memories of colonialism . . . [is] likely to create cultural and psychological obstacles to assimilation into the [new] system, while forgetting makes for

²⁴ “new Man, fully conscious of his national, continental and international rights and duties.” (Wolfers 119)

easier assimilation – and acceptance” (Dirlik, “Rethinking Colonialism” 439-440).

Looking at it from an *intra*-national perspective, the suggestion of the postcolony as an entangled temporality denies the rupture with colonial practices so desired by anticolonial nationalisms. Writing from the vantage point of historical distance, Mbembe’s reflections on the postcolony will take into account around fifty years of post-independence historical development and nation-building process in Africa in order to address the achievements and problems of the nationalistic projects. Different from those whose political commitment see such a critique in its potential undermining of the post-independence accomplishments, the conceptual perspective of Mbembe into the temporality of the postcolony takes into account the overly discussed agency of the subaltern. It calls into question the responsibility of African elites in keeping, through appropriation, a number of colonial practices to subjugate the same people it was once committed to liberate.

If we consider Derrida’s thought that “we can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip in the form, the logic and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest” (*Writing and Difference* 354), we can very much understand the principle of entangled temporality in the postcolony. Trapped within a play of difference with “colony”, the “postcolony” can only exist by opposition to that which it contests, thus being defined by the very logic it seeks to displace. Before the

poststructuralist scent of such a view enrages any allergic reader, it would be useful to remember that the praxis of such a play of sameness and difference is already inscribed in the history of the postcolony way before Derrida became mainstream. It was part of the anticolonial thought which put colonialism down and installed the *commandement* of the independent postcolony. As Fanon has put it “[d]ecolonization is the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by nature, which in fact owe their originality to that sort of substantification which *results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies*” (*The Wretched* 36; emphasis added).

To think of the entanglement between colonial and postcolonial is key to understanding the pitfalls to which the anticolonial nationalisms of the Portuguese-speaking African countries succumbed. Its critique, as the following chapters will seek to demonstrate, will come to constitute an important trend in the literary works of Portuguese-speaking Africa conceived almost forty years after their independence days. For now on, we are going to depart from Mbembe’s wider conceptualization of postcolony as a time of entanglement, used to think about the “postcolonial African subject, his/her history and his/her present in the world” (*On the Postcolony* 17), and move towards a related concept tailored to address the Portuguese-speaking African subjectivity: the idea of *intra-colonialism*.

Intra-colonialism is a concept taken from Bernard McGuirk and has been developed to analyze postcolonial Angolan processes of identity-building in relation to its colonial past based on the reading of José Eduardo

Agualusa's novel *O Vendedor de Passados* (*The Book of Chameleons*)²⁵. Analyzing the novel's fictionalization of the selective reweaving of memory, McGuirk deepens a critique of postcolonial forgetting by proposing that the process is not only used to promote the obliteration of colonial continuities in the aftermath of independence. He asserts that the practice becomes fundamental as an attempt to dress the more recent wounds carved by the almost thirty years of civil war in which the enemy was the very "brother" that anticolonial nationalisms sought to liberate.

More than simply highlighting Agualusa's literary fashion to expose an intentional selective play of memory and forgetting behind the programmatic efforts to build up some sort of national identity for a postcolony thirsty for new beginnings²⁶, McGuirk goes further. What he sees through Agualusa's fictional construct is a critique of the postcolonial sovereign State that appropriates the authoritative ideological colonial mode of discourse to re-write and forget its own misdeeds as a form of intra-colonialism:

'Memory is a landscape watched from the window of a moving train'. . . Intra-colonialism would rattle along,

²⁵ Besides our borrowing from McGuirk's usage of the term "intra-colonialism" regard to his 2009 article titled "Intra-Colonialism or l'Animation Mosaïque of the Black Atlantic: Re(p)tiling Angola in J.E. Agualusa's *O Vendedor de Passados/The Book of Chameleons*", the term can be found on the critic's work as early as 1997 as found on the book *Latin American Literature: Symptoms, Risks and Strategies of Poststructuralist Criticism*.

²⁶ For a more extensive analysis on how this trend is manifest throughout Agualusa's works see Ana Margarida Fonseca's "A Invenção do Futuro: (Re) Escritas do Passado nos Contos de José Eduardo Agualusa".

discursive lapses on track, halting not at some recuperable or necessary past . . . but forever in a present which has moved on, re-tracing, re-mapping, that History in which rewriting is a norm. (300)

McGuirk's terminological choice, as he depicts postcolonial resources for nation-building as intra-colonial, is critically productive. When Mbembe states that "African regimes have not invented what they know of government from scratch . . . part of [their] knowledge or rationality is *colonial rationality*" (*On the Postcolony* 24-25; emphasis in the original), we have to remember that, although historically colonialism is often described as direct domination through political power promoted by alien agents to the dominated people (Cabral, "A Arma da Teoria" 186), it is important not to forget that the main instrument of domination holding the colony together was violence (196). If we think of intra-colonialism as a set of colonial practices perpetrating postcolonial structures, a product of entangled temporalities, what we see is the elimination of the alien political domination after independence that accounts for the *intra* pre-fixation of a lasting colonialism in the form of a praxis of violence. According to Albert Memmi:

In addition to economic exploitation and cultural alienation, colonization is the history of a succession of unbearable constraints Yet, even with liberation, the violence continued, the faces were just about the same, the

executioners the same. There are not many ways to torture, to deprive someone of his freedom or his life. Some commentators will say that this was necessary to consolidate the country's growing power against potential enemies, sometimes even against militants in the independence movement, men and women who had until then been completely devoted but who failed to understand that the revolution was over and was absurd – dangerous, in fact – to assume that every promise would be kept. (49)

The violence to which Memmi refers is a well-known and little discussed historical issue throughout the majority of the Portuguese-speaking African countries. Although the violence which swept the postcolonial societies of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, for example, is seen by some as a direct legacy of the population's militarization required to fight the anticolonial war (Borges Coelho "Da violência colonial ordenada" 177), it is important not to forget the role of violence in these country's politics. Violence is one of the most widely employed repressive tools for dictatorship, which has been argued to be the *de facto* political system in place disguised as single-party "guided democracy" models (Sklar 20-21) of those three countries for almost twenty years – remembering that the first multi-party elections in Angola were held in 1992, and Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique in 1994. According to Patrick Chabal,

[i]n those three countries, as in the whole of postcolonial Africa, the construction of the nation-state involved three distinct, but crucial, steps. The first was to mobilise support for the nation-building party. The second was to *neutralize internal (political, ethic, religious or regional) opposition*. The third was to establish a political system able to balance the demands for representation with the need for consolidating “national” unity. (54; emphasis added)

In the light of such historical facts, the resurgence of the Angolan purge of 1977²⁷ at the heart of *O Vendedor de Passados* as the unforgettable memory of politically and ideologically motivated violence, is the one element connecting the dots of the story. It constitutes the resurfacing of the type of inconvenient fact that any intra-colonial search for a postcolonial *tabula rasa* will tend to erase, and that most pieces of critical literature will try to recuperate. The understanding of the postcolonial as a synthesis of a dialectical processes – *à la* Hegel – between the colonial and the anticolonial, erases the continuations and reconfigurations as it neutralizes hierarchies and oppositions within itself. However, notwithstanding its importance for a foreign critique of African literatures written in Portuguese, the conciliatory view of the postcolony in terms of time and

²⁷ The purge of 1977 is a reference a bloody period in the history of Angola. Following what is referred to as a coup by different fractions of MPLA on the night of May 27th 1977, quickly suffocated with the help of the Cuban troops in the country, came a time of terror and political persecution involving illegal arrests, torture and execution of whomever could be considered as a threat for those in power.

space as an *aufhebung* of the colonial/anticolonial clash is scarcely productive. While this perspective can be useful for those eager to prove the undeniably essential case against international capitalism, and is extremely useful to the unveiling of its behavior as an *inter*-national phenomenon, it can still be quite critically unproductive as a way to address the *intra*-national issues of the postcolony itself. In this sense, working as a “pedra no meio do caminho” (“a stone in the middle of the road”) of a means of thinking that sees the colonial as *aufgehaben* into the postcolonial, the intra-colonial²⁸ deconstructs the triangular sublimation by causing its interruption. It rescues the operative oppositions from within the postcolony, and constitutes a productive critical perspective for approaching the far more complex projection of postcolonial Africa in literature.

While politically motivated violence is one of the intra-colonial praxes of nation-building in the postcolony time-spaces of Portuguese-speaking Africa, the “dictatorship of material poverty” (Sklar 29) is another. Even when the states of Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe are seen as less politically violent than their continental counterparts, it is a deep poverty and inequality which victimizes their populations. In both countries, the main issue seems to have been the concentration of wealth in the hands of those in power during the single-party political period. While in Cape Verde the privatization processes that followed the country’s

²⁸ While the terms “anticolonial” and “postcolonial” are not hyphenated in order to show the very entanglement between the colonial logic/praxis and its prefixal inflection, the hyphenation of “intra-colonial” and its derivatives keeps the spelling used by Bernard McGuirk.

economic opening are not transparent and are suspicious (Silva Andrade 290), in São Tomé and Príncipe it is possible to note that “[n]ationalization allowed the ruling elite to monopolize access to land, jobs and other resources through the state in order to maintain political control and attract followers” (Seibert 300). Yet, as those problems are not exclusive trademarks of these two particular countries, and given that material poverty dictates the rules also for the majority of the population in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, it is possible to identify a set of shared intra-colonial practices throughout the postcoloniality of the five Portuguese-speaking African countries concerning their consolidation of State, their use of violence and their distribution of wealth.

Therefore, in an effort to depart from, and respond to, a critical concern much more preoccupied by those literatures’ external relevance than by their portraits of internal dissonance, this study shares Memmi’s query that if “[t]he writer is a storyteller, but often, also an accuser ... [on such contexts, perpetrated by contradictions, w]hat does the literature of the ex-colonized tell us?”. Should we agree with him when he states that:

what is referred to as an independent thinker, exercising a critical intellect directed towards his peers still doesn’t exist in the new society . . . all writing is suspected and controlled. The only writing that is tolerated is conformist, the praise of politicians and religious leaders, bland folkloric tales,

reminders of a supposedly glorious past that will help the people forget the mediocrity of the present (36)?

Besides the inevitable existence, in any society, of acritical literature, we believe that the case of what has been written recently in Portuguese-speaking Africa is far from that. Partially favored by a foreign editorial industry, which publishes and sells works of African authors outside Africa – namely Portugal and Brazil –, thereby releasing authors from the authoritative control of their works by internal political interests, the works that have been published in the last decade show vigorous fictional denunciations of the post-independence/colonial state of affairs of their countries. However, as the critical potential of literature might never be released if it does not find a critical reader, we should maybe give up looking for critical books and concentrate on trying to develop critical readings.

It is through the key of *intra*-colonial dimensions that the following analysis tries to critically write back to the *inter*-national field of critique of the African literatures written in Portuguese. Aiming to contribute to the field's unfolding and critical productivity, what follows in this study seeks alternative ways to look at the postcolony, which, as an entangled time-space concept, is always in movement, regardless of its directions.

Chapter 2

From Nation to State

We have seen in the preceding pages that nationalism, that magnificent song that made the people rise against their oppressors, stops short, falters and dies away on the day that independence is proclaimed. Nationalism is not a political doctrine, nor a programme. If you really wish your country to avoid regression, or at best halts and uncertainties, a rapid step must be taken from national consciousness to political and social consciousness.

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

O grande desafio da literatura moçambicana, assim como o da literatura das restantes ex-colónias portuguesas, é porventura como transitar do velho paradigma nacionalista para um novo paradigma democrático¹

João Paulo Borges Coelho, “Writing in Changing World”

The theme of the nation has, since the rise of the anticolonial struggles in the 1960's, constituted one of the most highlighted, acknowledged and studied themes in the African literatures written in

¹ The biggest challenge of Mozambican literature, as well as of the other Portuguese ex-colonies, is perhaps how to move from the old nationalist paradigm to the new democratic paradigm.

Portuguese. As a result, the body of works that up until now compose the respectable body of literary criticism in the field seem to resonate with Fredric Jameson's "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism", in their tendency to overrate the role of nationalism at the expense of internal struggles. This trait is much more indebted to criticism's own nationalistic orientation than any adherence to Jameson's problematically homogenizing statement of what "all third-world texts" would necessarily be (Jameson 69).

The pertinence of such a nationalist-centered critical approach to the literatures in question is justified by the dynamic of the literary works themselves, whose form and content are directly connected with their context of production. It is not rare to find young men and women of the revolutionary cadres in liberation struggles who would also express their fears and hopes through literature; among them can be counted Agostinho Neto, Amílcar Cabral, Samora Machel, Pepetela and Luandino Vieira. What the works written after 2000 will show us is that the theme of the nation is not over in the literatures of Portuguese-speaking Africa. What we see through these texts, produced about thirty years after the colonial period, are further critical complications of the theme of the nation, which moves from the claim of sovereignty to the state's effort to consolidate political independence through the creation of a nation-state. Analyzing this shift, which pushes criticism away from its nationalistic sympathies and forces it to dig deeper into the intra-colonial strategies employed by the State in the

forging of the nation-state, is necessary to understand the intricate and multilayered ways in which literature stages the post-independence pathways from national to political and social consciousness.

In one of its more remarkable characteristics, the rise of national consciousness in postcolonial societies is an effort largely anchored in a notion of difference in relation to the ex-colonizer from which a sense of commonality could emerge, giving way to the feeling of unity that is at the basis of the idea of nation as a community that is imagined, limited and sovereign (Anderson, *Imagined Communities*). Added to that, the systemic understanding of economy subjacent to the anticolonial revolutionary ideology which sustained the nationalist revolutionary struggles in Africa results in literary constructions craving readings that are much more concerned with achievements in the realm of international relations – such as the recognition of their right to sovereignty along with the discrediting of colonialism – than with achievements on an internal and national level. Such an indispensable and fruitful line of analysis is not only at the heart of Jameson's critical approach; it also distinctively marks the critical discourses on the African literary works we will analyze. As Jameson's example of homogenizing arguments about what he calls simply "third-world literature" shows us, no critical interference is devoid of traces of its author's own worldiness. In the case of Jameson it can be said that the overvaluation of nationalism is a situated effort to preach the wonders of social mobilization amidst the individualistic postmodernity of the United

States. What is missing then, perhaps as much in the literary works as in the critical discourse itself, is something that Aijaz Ahmad's "Jameson Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'" touched on briefly, but is latent throughout his essay: the intra-national dynamics.

Bringing the "Jameson-Ahmad" discussion to a work dedicated to a very specific transnational literary context such as this one should not be done without some proper caveats. First of all, our area is way more circumscribed than Jameson's very encompassing view of "third-world", which potentially groups cultural productions of countries as culturally diverse as Argentina and Somalia, since he unproblematically puts Latin America, Africa and Asia under a rubric that prescribes similar literary trends. Yet, it is important to note that the dispute over the validity of "third-world" as an analytical category put forward by Ahmad is not our concern here. In fact, due to their historical development, the countries of Portuguese-speaking Africa lend themselves quite well to Jameson's categorization. Therefore the relevance of this specific debate to the field of postcolonial studies does not reverberate the same way in our context. As the review of this debate conducted by Neil Lazarus in his book *The Postcolonial Unconscious* accurately shows – despite the author's open advocacy for Jameson and declared impatience with Ahmad – the polemic between the two theorists gave way to a "curious process through which his [Ahmad's] intended Marxist critique of Jameson's 'Third-Worldism' came to be taken up as 'Third-Worldist' critique of Jameson's Marxism and of

Marxism as such” (Lazarus 100). An interpretation which fuels the everlasting debate, on epic proportions, of the materialist versus poststructuralist-inclined critical approaches that are at the heart – the Unconscious, perhaps? – of postcolonial studies. This specific conflict, nonetheless, does not seem to keep many of the postcolonial-informed critics occupied with the literatures in question here awake at night, leading us to the provocative question: *whose* postcolonial unconscious? Having said that, what is pertinently productive for us concerning the Jameson-Ahmad discussion is to note how it brings up, already in the late 1980’s, the need for a complementarity of the inter-national perspective. Lacking that, one might run the risk of romanticizing the revolutionary machine of nationalism or the actual political constitutions of the postcolonies, where nationalisms’ side effects can be felt more clearly. As a reply to Jameson’s emphasis on the alienating power of postmodernism in the US, against which the third-world nationalisms rise as an inspiring example of resistance, Ahmad states:

Whether or not a nationalism will produce a progressive cultural practice depends, to put it in Gramscian terms, upon the political character of the power bloc which takes hold of it and utilizes it, as a material force, in the process of constituting its own hegemony. There is neither theoretical ground nor empirical evidence to support the notion that bourgeois nationalisms of the so-called third world will have

any difficulty with postmodernism; they *want* it. (Ahmad 8; emphasis in the original)

Ahmad's plea for dissociation of nationalism as a revolutionary force and the political inclination of the parties which took over power in any ex-colony is quite a significant one. Although it echoes Fanon's seminal "Pitfalls of national consciousness", it also relates to Cabral's advice in "The weapon of theory", where Cabral affirms that the national liberation struggle is incomplete if political independence is not followed by a social revolution that starts with the bourgeoisie's suicide as a class. However, Ahmad's appeal remains largely unnoticed. Even if we might not blindly sign up to his frontal attack on the "Three Worlds Theory", we can surely profit from his considerations regarding what is left behind when the international aspect of economic systems of production are seen as the only determining factor by critics who promote an "over-valorization of nationalist ideology" (Ahmad 8).

If this "third-world" is *constituted* by the singular "experience of colonialism and imperialism," and if the only possible response is a nationalist one, then what else is there that is more urgent to narrate than this "experience"; in fact, there is *nothing else* to narrate. For if societies here are defined not by relations of production but by relations of intra-national domination; if they are forever suspended outside the sphere of conflict between capitalism (first world)

and socialism (second world); if the motivating force for history here is neither class formation and class struggle nor the multiplicities of intersecting conflicts based upon class, gender, nation, race, region and so on, but by the unitary “experience” of national oppression . . . then what else can one narrate but that national oppression? (Ahmad 8-9, italics from the original)

It is understandable that the points raised by Ahmad could, in times of Cold War (the text is from 1987), seem unsatisfactory from the viewpoint of an engaged Marxist critique located in the developed world, to whom anticolonial nationalisms as well as their post-independence socialist experiences served as argument and inspiration for change. For us however, the multiplicity of intersecting conflicts within postcolonial societies has gained a greater supplementary importance if we are willing to understand contemporary national imaginations as portrayed in the literature of Portuguese-speaking Africa.

If we recall Fanon’s words with which we have opened this chapter, we see that the understanding of nationalism as a revolutionary force and not as a governmental platform is not new. Yet Fanon’s conceptualization of a quick transition from national to political consciousness is more successful as a desire than as an attainable goal. In multiethnic and multinational postcolonial societies, the process can only continue on a larger scale when colonial resistance has gone, that is, after independence. It is for that reason

that the two processes that Fanon imagined would follow one another had, in the case of the countries we are analyzing, to overlap. At the same time, the nationalism of anticolonial orientation did not die away on the day that independence was proclaimed. Instead, it was turned into an ideological weapon of the single-party State that followed independence in each of the five African countries that gained independence from Portugal². The recently created States also had to strive to reorganize themselves along with raising a social and political consciousness under a Marxist-Leninist orientation³.

The consolidation of postcolonial states under the mix of anticolonial nationalism and Marxism-Leninism is a distinctive commonality among Portuguese-speaking African countries. Such a mix, which “those in the west call ‘third world nationalism’[,] has never been successfully analyzed

² So proclaimed Agostinho Neto in his speech during the 6th Conference of the Afro-Asian Writers in Luanda, on July 1st 1979: “O problema que se põe agora em Angola, como em todas as outras regiões do mundo, é o da transformação do carácter da sociedade. É entre o Socialismo que avança e o capitalismo moribundo. Assim acontece entre o colonialismo e a Independência, entre o racismo e a igualdade, entre o poder burocrático e o poder popular. Não há Independência verdadeira sem o Socialismo. Mas estamos ainda na era das unidades nacionais, e por isso mesmo o nacionalismo. Cada unidade nacional vive a sua história, explicando-a de modo a preservar direitos soberanos e a integridade territorial. De modo também a desenvolver a cultura e a valorizar os temas que servem a sua atividade”. [“The problem now in Angola, as well as in other parts of the world, is the transformation of society. It is between advancing Socialism and dying capitalism. It equally happens between colonialism and Independence, between racism and equality, between bureaucratic power and popular power. There is no true independence without Socialism. However, we are still in the age of national unities, and for this reason, of nationalism. Each national unit lives its history, explaining it to preserve sovereign rights and territorial integrity, and also to develop culture and to value the themes which serve the nation’s activity”]; (*Sonho* 72)

³ It is largely accepted that state-building and nation-building are processes that overlap. Our focus on these processes as separate phenomena allow us to observe more clearly the state’s influence in the raising of national consciousness that is necessary to transform the sovereign postcolonial state into a nation-state. A detailed conceptual analysis of these two terms can be found in Linz 355-369.

by theorists of nationalism because it never operated according to a general model, or even ideology” (Young, *Postcolonialism* 172). Its implications for post-independence nation-building, although inescapable, remain largely undebated. In order to understand its commonalities we might be willing to take a closer look at another important historical case of strict relations between revolutionary movement and the rise of a state: the Soviet-type state.

The Soviet-type state was the name used by Gianfranco Poggi to designate non-fascist single-party states of communist orientation such as the one erected by the Soviet Union after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. What is interesting in Poggi’s analysis is the extent to which he links statist Soviet use of coercive tools to maintain its party (in) power with the very revolutionary drive to exterminate capitalism by eliminating the market and private property. For Poggi, it was only through the control of a public sphere “within which the composition of the political leadership and . . . the content of policy would be at issue in a legitimate and orderly contest for public support among competing parties” that the state could keep itself in power in order to assure the continuation of revolutionary achievements. This method of manipulating the public sphere, still according to Poggi, was inherited from the Tsarist’s time, which “had never previously allowed a public sphere and a constitutional order to come into being” (147). Consequently, as soon as they are in power, the revolutionary feared the very conspiratorial political and cultural conditions through which it came

into being. “In this sense, we might say, Bolshevik rule was forced upon a novel and (from a Western standpoint) abhorrent path to the exercise of state power because of *where it came from*” (148; emphasis in the original).

In the same way, an assessment of the means employed by the postcolonial governments of Portuguese-speaking Africa to legitimate their power and to build their countries after independence during their single-party years, ought to take into consideration the series of continuations that characterize the post-, be it postcolonial or post-revolutionary, as a time of entanglement and becoming. More for an imposition of circumstances than for the adherence to any revolutionary mode, since “tricontinental Marxism has emphasized what one might call untranslatability of revolutionary practices, the need for attention to local forms, and the translation of the universal into the idiom of the local”⁴ (Young, *Postcolonialism* 169), the series of forces at play in those countries’ postcolonial present cannot be delinked from their colonial past. In a process which seems to be similar to what Poggi saw in the Soviet Union, the single-party state regimes from the mid 1970’s until the political opening in the early 1990’s that were in place in all five countries of Portuguese-speaking Africa, were instituted and ruled by state-parties that stemmed directly from their respective local anticolonial movements. They inherited, along with the mission to

⁴ As Amílcar Cabral clearly stated in the occasion of the 1st Conference of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America, “national liberation and social revolution are not exportable commodities. They are (and increasingly so every day) a local, national product – more or less influenced by (favourable and unfavourable) external factors, but essentially determined and conditioned by the historical reality of each people” (Wolfers 122).

extinguish all forms of colonialism, a number of vices and traumas through which they came into being during colonial times, such as the instrumentalization of violence - the appropriated colonial weapon used first to make the revolution and later incorporated as a means to secure it. Heavily surveyed public spheres came into being because political opposition could constitute a serious threat to the postcolonial way into socialism in times of war, which includes the Cold War and the continued state of war in Angola and Mozambique.

Despite the approximately twenty years separating the end of the single-party political system in Portuguese-speaking Africa from the most recent novel looked at here, the revolutionary parties, along with their intracolonial mentality, still remain as the dominant political force in the majority of the five countries. Thus, it is understandable that a critique of the state is integral to literary discussions connected, in any degree, to the nation. The Angolan MPLA has been in power since independence in 1975 and has provided the only two presidents the country has ever had; Mozambique is still governed by Frelimo that has provided the only three presidents from independence to date; when it comes to São Tomé and Príncipe, despite a considerable alternation of the political parties in power, the first president who ruled the country under the single-party period (1975-1991) has been back in power since 2010; Cape Verde's leftist PAICV, the direct heir of the anticolonial PAIGC, has been alternating in power with the liberal opposition since the adoption of multipartidarism;

Guinea Bissau exists in a continuous state of political unrest having had a succession of military coups – the last one dating from 2012 –, an era that might be left behind as 2014 marks the comeback year of democratic elections in the country.

The observation of lingering legacies in the political realm of contemporary postcolonial Portuguese-speaking Africa should not be done with disregard for the series of ruptures that characterize these countries' governments' economic and ideological orientation since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Seen from our vantage point in history, more than two decades after these countries' abandonment of their socialist experiment, the consideration of what can be perceived, in retrospect, as a series of ruptures since their political opening and systematic embrace of neoliberal economy is equally relevant for the understanding of these countries' early 21st Century relationship between literature and society.

Written around the first decade of the current century, the novels we examine in this study portray sovereign states' postcolonialities that are simultaneously post-revolutionary, post-socialist, democratic and neoliberal. In scenarios such as these in which the postcolonial present is permanently haunted by the legacies of such a number of “post-s”, literary representations of the countries in question can engage with a variety of historical, ideological, social and cultural projects of nation-building deployed in a contingent manner over the last four decades since the achievement of their independences. With that in mind, our analysis of the

different ways in which the state is imagined in the prose-fiction of our corpus will make use of whichever tools prove themselves pertinent for the illumination of the meaningful particularities of each text. Yet, despite – or perhaps because of – the intrinsic textual specificity of every novel, we can find important connections that allow us to draw a wider comparative picture of the literary portrayal of the postcolonial state in Portuguese-speaking Africa.

In the section that follows we turn to our corpus to analyze the ways in which the State is projected in text and fiction by works of those countries' national literatures. In its subsequent five sections we will look, in detail, at how each novel portrays the State. In the last section of this chapter, we will draw our attention to the findings of our comparative enquiry.

2.1. Literary projections of State

2.1.1. Aurélia de Vento: the State in the time of becoming

Having conquered its independence much more as a result of the Portuguese Carnation Revolution than for any victory in the battlefield, São Tomé and Príncipe's non-violent transition from colony to sovereign state did not account for a free and peaceful independent society. The single-party Soviet-style State installed by the country's first government in July 1975 brought along its typical iron-handed approach seasoned with civil vigilance and conspiracy paranoia. As Gerhard Seibert puts it "[i]t was an

intra-elite struggle for power and resources, conducted by intrigues and conspiracies, and accompanied by actual or alleged coup attempts, which in return served to increase the authoritarian and repressive character of the regime” (297). Although comparative perspectives tend to pay little attention to the impact of the Santomean statist single-party political regime (1975-1990) and its legacy, preferring to focus on the expressive and dramatically bloodier regimes of bigger countries such as Angola and Mozambique, what its literature shows is that the weight of the State in the way society is narrated is no less expressive in São Tomé and Príncipe.

The literature of the archipelago-country is small if compared to the continental literatures of Portuguese-speaking Africa, and even if compared with its insular Cape Verdean counterpart. However, as the literary critic and Santomean citizen Inocência Mata replied when a Brazilian interviewer asked if São Tomé and Príncipe already had a literary system like that of Angola, Mozambique and Cape Verde: “[o] fato de um escritor não ser publicado em Portugal não quer dizer que ele não exista. . . . Gosto daquela afirmação do vosso Antonio Candido acerca da literatura brasileira: ‘Comparada às grandes, a nossa literatura é pobre e fraca. Mas é ela, não outra, que nos exprime’. É isso.”⁵ (“A essência dos caminhos que se entrecruzam” 6). And as a matter of fact, one can state that the Santomean experience has been more often expressed in poetry than in prose. As Mata

⁵ “[t]he fact that a writer is not published in Portugal does not mean that he does not exist . . . I like that statement of your Antonio Candido about Brazilian Literature: ‘Compared to the large ones, ours is poor and weak. But it is this one, not another, that expresses us’. That’s it.”

described in detail in her *Polifonias Insulares: Cultura e Literatura de São Tomé e Príncipe*, poetry was already a prolific genre in pre-independence days and kept its pace after a short period of literary silence after independence. Prose, on the other hand, with the exception of the work of Sum Marky whose first publication dates from 1956, developed mostly after independence. In this context, the works of Albertino Bragança can be distinguished by what the Santomean critic terms as a writing that “centra-se no ideológico, no político e no sociocultural do pós-independência: o universo é agora o das relações internas de poder entre os vários atores sociais, no diálogo entre a tradição e os imperativos da sua actualização, marcas afinal da escrita pós-colonial”⁶ (*Polifonias* 88).

It is slightly different than the project of Bragança’s previous narrative, *Aurélia de Vento* is a novel about a woman. Put briefly, the plot brings us the story of Aurélia, a correct, honest, beautiful and fearless woman who lives life her own way. She helps others (she is the president of the Civil Association for Mutual Help), and seeks justice and conciliation even when attacked. Her final victory comes when she survives an assassination attempt ordered by her stepmother Clotilde. Nevertheless, the story within the story seems to betray the author’s declared aim to simply “trazer as nossas raízes, encontrar também muitos dos nossos medos, as

⁶ “focuses the ideological, political and sociocultural aspects of the post-independence: the universe is now internal power relations between the various social actors, in a dialogue between tradition and the imperatives of its updating, finally marks of post-colonial writing”.

nossas superstições. Não obstante estar de acordo com elas as trouxe ao público, para que pudéssemos reflectir sobre as mesmas e chegarmos a consenso”⁷ (Bragança, *Interview*). Taking up six of the seventeen chapters of the narrative, the story of Aurélia’s father, the Portuguese-born white farmer Pedro Santos, from whom the State – with a capital “S” as the original Portuguese *Estado* is capitalized throughout the book – wants to take a legitimately owned plot of land at any cost.

Regardless of Aurélia’s alleged place as protagonist in the narrative, a matter that will be further discussed in Chapter 3, the softness of her actions and her relative first-person silence, as she speaks less than she is spoken about – mostly by the voices of other men such as the omniscient narrator or male characters – turn the quest for justice of Pedro Santos against the State into the beating-heart section of the narrative, being just as intense as the episode of Aurélia’s assassination attempt, which is the climax of the narrative. Pedro is the one character actively seeking justice by naming, along with its perpetrators, the injustice that victimizes him. After a mild introduction in the first chapter of Aurélia, whose voice we never hear, the book turns to Pedro’s voice, in a conversation with his partner Clotilde, the one that opens the following chapter:

– Infelizmente, parece que você tem razão. Pela conversa
que eu tive com o diretor, fiquei a pensar que há gente que

⁷ “bring up our roots, but also face many of our fears, our superstitions. Besides not agreeing with them I have brought them to the public, so that we could reflect and reach consensus over them”.

julga que tem mais direito sobre aquelas terras do que eu que sou o seu dono. – Tamborilou os dedos sobre o tampo da mesa descolorida, o ar congestionado, o rosto alagado em suor – Mas, eu digo você, eu vou até o fim nesse negócio. Para já o terreno de Potó Zamblala nunca foi do Estado...

– É verdade, mas se Governo quer comprar, como é que você faz?

– Comprar? Qual Comprar? Eles querem obrigar-me a vender contra a minha vontade e a um preço mais do que barato, para mais tarde facilitar as terras aos amigos deles. Isso é o que eles querem. Mas eu é que não vou calar a boca nesse assunto. Você vai ver!...⁸ (Bragança, *Aurélia* 23-24)

In its first mention the State is designated for its corruption. Embodied mostly by the character of Minister Domingos Ventura, the State is actually the only place in which we can find corrupt people throughout the narrative, as the other characters who commit villainies in the novel did not do so in order to obtain material advantage. Clotilde's ordered attempt against Aurélia's life is a crime of passion. The defamation of Aurélia by her husband's cousin is an act of jealousy, and the very assassination

⁸ Unfortunately, it seems you are right. By my conversation with the director I even think that there are people who judge themselves more worthy of that land than me, who own it. – He drummed his fingers over the discolored table, his breathing heavy, his face sweaty – But, I tell you, I'll go through with this until the end. Now I tell you that the land of Potó Zamblala has never belonged to the State... / --It is true, but if the government wants to buy it, what are you going to do? / -- To buy it? They want to force me to sell it against my will by a more-than-cheap price, so that later then can transfer the lands easily to their friends. That is what they want. But I will not be quiet about it. You will see!...

attempt against the protagonist does not appear to have brought the doer any kind of material compensation, as it is never mentioned in the course of the story. It seems as if, in a counterbalance to the immoral pursuit of material advantage sought by those in government, the whole of the country's population is portrayed as living in a sort of economic mutual respect and solidarity in which the rich help the poor and the poor help the rich, suggesting the absence of class struggles and confining the existing conflicts to the order of social conviviality. The only person or entity in pursuit of financial advantage is the State, in the guise of Minister Ventura. In doing so, this specific novel seems to suggest that the nation is already there; it is the State that has to be reinvented.

It is almost as if the feeling of brotherhood that underlines the national sentiment arises as a result of mass opposition to the State. This is similar to the raising of national consciousness that took place in the final colonial days, in which a sense of sameness among the colonized is achieved through opposition to the colonizer. It would account for the popular support given both to Pedro Santos' case against the State and to Aurélia after her attack despite the social abyss that separates the people from these two elite characters. In fact, Aurélia's attacker will be captured and brought to justice by the free initiative of three simple men of the people who, although not knowing the victim personally, feel compelled to risk their lives to protect her for the sake of justice. In another passage, after Pedro Santos' victory in court, his backyard is flooded by people who were

following the case and who celebrated his victory against the system as their own. Aurélia “[r]econhecia que o pai, pessoa de poucas falas, não era um homem verdadeiramente popular; por isso, considerava a enchente no quintal mais como à espontânea reação de quem não se habituara ainda à ideia de que um ministro pudesse, em qualquer caso, sair derrotado perante um qualquer cidadão...”⁹ (86-87). Would it be a “iniludível sinal dos tempos ou um facto isolado, casual, a que se não deva atribuir especial significado?”¹⁰ (86).

New times or not, the solidarity and collaboration between social classes in *Aurélia* resonate with the not-so-new, yet powerful, idea of Amílcar Cabral (2008 [1966]) for an alliance between the bourgeoisie and peasantry, in which it was the duty of the first to use its privileged position and to come to terms with its historical responsibility, paving the way against colonialism towards a more equal future in post-independence society (“A arma” 198). The meaningful difference in the context of this novel is that Pedro and Aurélia – along with the lawyer Altino Castro – are not fighting colonialism. They oppose the independent State instead. On the other hand, the conciliatory scene of the narrative’s final chapter in which State, religion and law – given the presence of two ministers, one of which

⁹ “she knew that her father, man of few words, was not a truly popular man, for this reason, she considered the multitude of people in his yard as a spontaneous reaction of people who are not yet used to the idea that a minister could, by any chance, be defeated by an ordinary citizen”

¹⁰ “inescapable sign of the times or an isolated, casual fact, to which one should not attach much meaning?”

is Domingos Ventura, the Bishop and the Director of the Judiciary Police – come together to visit Aurélia after the assassination attempt does not signal a disillusioned critique of the State. In an ending in which the postcolonial State - defeated on lawful grounds by a citizen who is a white man born as a colonial settler - still agrees to pay respects to the victor's daughter, we see a fictional projection pointing towards a constructive and positive future. The formation of a productive critique, as portrayed in the image of a future in which the organized people obtain the power to influence the heavy hand of State, parallels the writing of a *devenir* of active postcolonial political and social consciousness.

The experience of time as entanglement in *Aurélia de Vento*, articulates the postcolonial present in the terms put forward by Mbembe and discussed in Chapter 1 as “precisely that moment when different forms of absence become mixed together: the absence of those presences that are no longer so and that one remembers (the past), and the absence of those others that are yet to come and are anticipated (the future)” (*Postcolony* 16). As a result the narrative portrays the critical aspect of postcolonial time in which both the absent colonial past, making itself present in the deployment of (anti)colonial reason, and the promise of a future with equality, based on the performance of justice, cling together. In that way the juxtaposition of the colonial, anticolonial and intracolonial mentalities and practices in the postcolonial present constitutes a structuring feature embodied by the central characters of the story and the pace of the narrative itself.

Pedro Santos's character and struggle – central to the narrative – illustrate the different strands intertwined in the Santomean postcoloniality woven in *Aurélia de Vento*. The same way the color of his skin signifies the colonial difference of the past, his present defiance of the post-independence intracolonial intransigence of the State signals the lingering of a colonial logic of race whose surpassing is already anticipated, at the time in which it was claimed:

- Pedro, outra coisa é que você esquece que você é estrangeiro, num país em que a independência nem tem ainda muito tempo, raiva contra branco ainda não passou tudo. É preciso você compreender isso. Nem sempre coisa anda com pressa que a gente quer...

- Estrangeiro, eu? Não nasci aqui, mas a filha que fiz, todo o amor que demonstrei ter para com este povo? Só fiquei em S. Tomé porque é aqui onde eu quero viver, onde me sinto bem. É por eu defender os meus direitos que têm que esquecer todo o passado?¹¹ (Bragança, *Aurélia* 24)

The State's choice to forget Pedro's personal history in the promotion of a homogenizing and Manichean version of a collective history,

¹¹ - Pedro, something you forget is that you are a foreigner, in a country where independence has just happened, anger against whites is not yet all over. You have to understand this. Its not always that things go as fast as we want.../ -Me, foreigner? I was not born here but the daughter I had, all the love that I have always shown for this people? I have only stayed in S. Tomé because it is here that I want to live, where I feel good. Is it because I fight for my rights that all my past has to be forgotten?

adds some realistic color to the way the individual is too often obliterated for the establishment of grand narratives. Pedro's manipulation by the power in charge is made explicit throughout the novel, as we can see by the words of minister Ventura, as he seeks to convince his lawyer of the legitimacy of his claim:

mas, diga-me lá doutor, afinal de contas, desde quando é que o Estado tem de se submeter à vontade [refere-se na verdade ao direito] de um cidadão, ainda por cima estrangeiro?

. . .

Acha mesmo que eu baixo os braços assim à primeira, podendo invocar o interesse público e expropriar o terreno ao maldito agricultor? Será que não existe mesmo nenhuma hipótese de forçar o tipo a vender ou, tratando-se de um estrangeiro, ameaçar expulsá-lo senão se dispuser a fazê-lo?¹² (Bragança, *Aurélia* 46-47)

The minister's manipulation of Pedro's belonging as an argument to strip him from his civil rights (for despite the fact that he was born overseas he is a Santomean citizen) reflects the intracolonial appropriation of the colonial discourse of exclusion based on race. Despite referring to Pedro

¹² But tell me, doctor, at the end of the day, since when has the State to submit to the will [actually to the right] of a citizen, a foreign citizen on top of that? / . . . / Do you really believe that I give up so fast when I can evoke public concern to take the land from the damned farmer? There would not really be any way to force the guy to sell, since he is a foreigner, threaten to expel him if he is unwilling to do it?

simply as a foreigner – a term which would not, in itself, necessarily imply a connection with the former colonizing power –, his Portuguese birthplace, white skin color, and landowner status are enough to surround the proposal of his expulsion with the specters of (anti)colonial resentment, too present in its absence in Ventura’s words. As affirmed by Fanon “we see that the primary Manichaeism which governed colonial society is preserved intact during the period of decolonization; that is to say that the settler never ceases to be the enemy, the opponent, the foe that must be overthrown” (Fanon 39).

Within a post-independence context, the resort to anticolonial reason in *Aurélia* is made into a mode of critique. Shown to be contradictory, and embedded in the very colonial reason it sought to dismantle, the nationalist roots of the State apparatus constructed in the narrative are conceived in their spectrality. Personified by the figure of the recently deceased San Labeca, mother of Ventura’s faithful secretary Aydi, who is described as “uma nacionalista exacerbada tentando impor aos outros os padrões da sua visão das coisas”¹³ (Bragança, *Aurélia* 42), Labeca’s intransigency is regarded as a problematic legacy: “Desde jovem San Labeca guardava no peito o sonho de um país livre e por isso se juntou à Cívica logo no início da fase final da luta. Fê-lo de forma quase religiosa, fanática mesmo, tal como acontecia com a grande maioria. Ela era dos que consideravam que a

¹³ “an exacerbated nationalist trying to impose on her standards on others”

verdade só havia uma, a do Movimento e mais nenhuma”¹⁴ (Bragança, *Aurélia* 36). It is due to its negative legacy that the law, personified by the righteous lawyer Altino Castro, moves away both from minister Ventura and Aydi; from the State and its supportive nationalist argument. The lawyer refuses to represent the State against Pedro Santos, and decides to separate from Aydi, the wife who could not escape the extremist influence of her nationalist mother, San Labeca.

Albertino Bragança’s fictional construction of the intracolonial power of State in a postcolonial present of time as entanglement spells out a grammar of becoming which is pregnant with hope for the future. The portrayal of the State as an intracolonial agent insofar as it appropriates from the colonial logic of race, is passed on by its anticolonial resignification, – “le mouvement armés anticoloniaux considéraient que l’ennemi était toujours, par principe, d’une autre race”¹⁵ (Mbembe, *Sortir* 230). This resignification used to manipulate the sense and the right to belong required to define the limits of the nation-state, points to the problem while, at the same time, signaling its solution. It is through a deconstructive construction of the postcolony, showing its inner character as a site of

¹⁴ “Since her youth Labeca had the dream of a free country, and for this reason, she joined the *Cívica* right in the early days of the struggle’s last phase. She did it almost religiously, even fanatically, such as the majority did. She was one of those who thought there was only one truth, the one of the *Movimento*”. *Cívica* was the name of the group created in 1974 in São Tomé and Príncipe to mobilize the local populations for the independence cause. The members of this group were supporters of the MLSTP – or *Movimento* – whose members, at the time, lived abroad for many years and were virtually unknown to the local population.

¹⁵ “the anticolonial armed movements saw the enemy as always, in principle, of another race”

entangled time, that the intracolonial State is historicized. Such historicization, despite challenging linearity, reveals the systemic underlying processes of resignification that are in place in the postcolonial State, indicating that “le passage de l’État racial à l’État démocratique est en train de s’accomplir”¹⁶ (Mbembe, *Sortir* 237), as long as resignification goes on.

It is in this context that the rise of law as a resource for the achievement of justice completes the entangled portrait of the narrative as the anticipation of a future *pour s’accomplir*. A future in which the force of law is there to face the muscular corpulence of the nationalist-oriented State – whose proportions are a mix of San Labeca’s “temíveis metro e noventa . . . e reconhecida irascibilidade de character”¹⁷ (Bragança, *Aurélia* 42) and Ventura’s reach, though his “dedos compridos, mais se assemelhando a garras e, sobretudo aquele olhar penetrante e desconfiado que dir-se-ia procurar devassar o interlocutor à sua frente”¹⁸ (44). A law which believes, as stated by the lawyer Altino Castro, that “[s]e são os cidadãos que fazem os Estados, seus interesses devem estar em primeiro lugar”¹⁹ (81), and who are thus the only resource capable of keeping “bourgeois leaders . . . [from] imprison[ing] national consciousness in sterile formalism”, making the nation into the actual “moving consciousness of the whole of the people; . . .

¹⁶ “the change from racial State to democratic State is about to happen”

¹⁷ “fearful six feet . . . and renowned irascible character”

¹⁸ “long fingers, resembling claws and, above all, that piercing and suspicious look that seemed to scrutinize the interlocutor standing in front of him”

¹⁹ “if citizens are the ones who make the State, their interests must come first”

the coherent, enlighten[ing] action of men and women” (Fanon *The Wretched* 165).

The investment in the role of the law as an overarching force of internal cohesion and justice marks, in *Aurélia de Vento*, the progression from national consciousness to political and social consciousness in that postcolonial society. An *avenir* whose *devenir*, inscribed in a time of juxtaposition, can only be possible through the resignification of the use of force. In this sense, the emergence of justice in advocacy of the people indicates the assignment of a new meaning to the use of violence. Employed by colonialism, appropriated by anticolonialism and monopolized by the intra-colonialism of State, violence’s future incarnation is to serve justice, enforcing the law and only then, finally, serving the people.

2.1.2. Campo de Trânsito: *State as discursive actualization*

Departing from the Santomean *Aurélia de Vento* on a tour through the remaining four novels included in this study, we see a permanence of the depiction of State as an important force that organizes their fictional national universes. Interestingly enough each of these novels, when compared, sheds light on aspects of the State that, despite their differences, are still quite related to one another. Each of them offers a singular and yet related interpretation of the state in terms of the entangled time of becoming.

The Mozambican *Campo de Trânsito*, 2006, is the most schematic novel among our group of five. The story does not take place in Mozambique, nor are any connections with the country made explicitly throughout the narrative, which has led a number of critics to highlight its universality (Mendonça “Ovídio e Kafka”, Can “Para além da história”) in place of its potential local historicity (Moreira “Memória e história”) in digging up the controversial memory of the post-independence Mozambican reeducation camps. Universal or not – as discussions concerning the novel’s disputed rescue of national memory will be deepened in Chapter 3 – and leaving aside the complications inherent to the idea of universality itself, it would be valuable for the moment to concentrate on the enormous role of the state as the organizing power of the plot.

The story of the journey of protagonist J. Mungau starts with his abduction from his city apartment to incarceration in a prisoners’ camp, the Transit Camp, which is where the action is centered until he leaves, at the end of the story, under the custody of the same coercive authority that detained him in the first place. Through the strategic use of showing instead of telling, the omniscient narrator makes a hostage of every reader as we know nothing except what is presented to the character. This is how we know Mungau is under arrest: “Estás detido!” (“You’re under arrest!”; *Campo* 10); likewise, we are kept guessing as to who takes him and where he is taken to: “[t]ranspõem os altos portões de ferro, dão uma curva larga

no pátio do Comando e estacionam junto ao edifício principal”²⁰(15). The description of Mungau’s captors implies that he was taken by agents of the State (16) to a place that is always hinted at, but never named, as a prison (18).

As we follow Mungau’s experiences in our role as readers, we experience that “to read is to struggle to name, to subject the sentences of the text to a semantic transformation. This transformation is erratic; it consists in hesitating among several names” (Barthes 92). Mungau’s hesitation in naming “police” or “prison” is passed onto the reader. A process permeated by an undecidability whose political significance is underlined by the performative meaning of the character’s silence and the reader’s potential discomfort in the face of this responsibility to decide. Up to page thirty-six, we are obliged to decide for ourselves the name of the institution which is holding the protagonist. After all, we are ourselves too aware of who has the monopoly on violence in such settings. In a Hegelian fashion, the State is only named as the uncivilized deep into the interior, kept from reason and from the “universal” as hostages of nature and tradition, to whom it cannot signify²¹:

²⁰ “[t]hey transpose high iron gates, end up on a wide curve of Command’s yard and park in front of the main building”

²¹ “Indeed, this perplexity and difficulty of theirs [who have unsophisticated hearts] is proof rather that they want as the substance of the right and the ethical not what is universally recognized and valid, but something else. If they had been serious with what is universally accepted instead of busying themselves with the vanity and particularity of opinions and things, they would have clung to what is substantively right, namely to the commands of the ethical order and the state, and would have regulated their lives in accordance with these.” (Hegel *Right* 3-4)

“Missão de Estado!”, vocifera [o agente], pretendendo com isso intimidar os marinheiros.

Mas ninguém conhece alí o Estado, palpável apenas quando grupos como esse chegam e partem, nada de concreto que se veja e possa incutir respeito. Prossegue por isso a negociação enquanto os detidos, imóveis e expectantes, se deixam sobrevoar pelas libélulas e devorar pelos mosquitos. Por pouco chegam a vias extremas, o Bexigoso fora de si sublinhando os argumentos com o cano das espingardas.²²

(36)

As we see throughout the narrative, the whole architecture of the state in *Campo de Trânsito* seems to relate to Hegel’s philosophical blueprint, whose “abstractions are attempts to come to terms with society” (Hobsbawn 303). It inspires and precedes the thoughts of Marx that were key to the constitution of the post-independence Mozambican State. Through such an interpretative strand, one could assume Borges Coelho’s fictional projection of State to be an allegory of the potential distortions of the “external positive” and “necessary authority of the state” (Hegel *Right* 3, 161) *vis-a-vis* the loss that has to take place via the negative dialectical

²² Mission of State!”, hollers [the agent], intending thus to intimidate the sailors. / But nobody there knows the State, palpable only when groups such as this come and go, with anything concrete that can be seen to instill respect. He therefore goes on negotiating while the inmates, expecting, motionless, let themselves be pestered by dragonflies and devoured by mosquitoes. They almost get to extremes, Bexigoso, out of himself, underlying his arguments with his guns.

movement concerning the becoming of the individual. An assimilative process fully supported by Marx in his fight against constitutional monarchy (*Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of History*), embraced by Marxism, theorized by Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, and incorporated in Marxism-Leninism as the notion of the individual – it is occluded by the urgency of the struggle against private property on a way to more equal societies before being adopted by the anticolonial revolutionary movements in Portuguese-speaking Africa, and materialized as the project for the “Homem Novo” (“New Man”) embraced in Mozambique. In this respect, the passage of the novel above shows us three different moments of men in relation to the full realization of civil society into the ethical Idea: men who are away from reason, connected to the realm of untamed nature and tradition, and therefore unable to recognize the State; men who are in their transitional moment – metaphorically and materially as they are actually in transit at that point in the narrative – towards reason as they recognize the State but are yet inactive. They do not transform nature, and allow themselves to be devoured by mosquitos. Also, the men of State themselves on their duty to bring reason upon the other two groups by leading them into the exercise of labor as a mode of mediation (Hegel *Phen. of Spirit* 117). This is done towards the interest of the whole, or the State, by “sensitizing” the ferry operators regarding the urgencies of State missions and by transporting individuals to their educative experience of labor at the camps.

The camps of the novel work as institutions for the labor-mediated dialectic transformation in which the State, in its role as “the actuality of the ethical Idea” (Hegel *Phil. of Right* 155), is actualized by the objectification of individual subjectivities through stripping inmates of their names, (hi)stories, past and future. They are then called by the nouns denoting their function in the construction of the camp as a collectivity (prisoner, Director, Teacher, Teacher’s Woman, Tea Seller...). In so being, one of the initial moments of Mungau’s transformation – he was named as such by the omniscient narrator but never by any of his interlocutors, who call him prisoner – is the important loss of his name upon arrival at the camp. As he is re-baptized 15.6, which stands for the location of his small private accommodation, Mungau is therefore named after a place. According to Hegel, place as a concept is itself a token for becoming as it is identified by the concrete point of the transition of space into time (*Phil. of Nature Vol. 1* 236-237). While Mungau, now sublated into 15.6, refers to the materiality of his subjective moment (and place) of becoming, the character embodying the Director of the camp complex (including the Transit, the Old and the New Camp) is named according to his location in the objective realm of the Idea. His designation, therefore, if we follow Hegel, cannot be material like Mungau’s for the State is the actuality of the ethical Idea, thus absolute and suspended in space and time. This impedes the possibility of the Director’s having a place, defined precisely in terms of space and time as the “unity of here and now”. The objectified Director, thus, can be read as the

personification of the State in its role of ethical synthesis between subject and object – “O Director é o Estado, se é que este último pode se resumir numa única pessoa”²³ (Borges Coelho *Campo* 134). And as the dialectic principle stands the synthesis represented by the Director carries on characteristics of the elements it *heben auf*, or sublate. Besides being absolute – or maybe *because* absolute –, the Director masters both space (the camps) and time as he also embodies the present.

In his role as the promoter of change, development and enlightenment of arbitrarily caught prisoners made into an enlightened collectivity in the camps, the camps work as an interesting system. The Transit Camp is the place for learning, specifically through the hands of the Teacher. A place of indoctrination that reminds us a lot of Louis Althusser’s definition of Ideological State Apparatus (143), through school and farming – reason and labor. Through testing them for their exercise of thought or their ability to triumph over nature, prisoners could be sent either to the Old or the New Camp that alienates them either from their reason or their strength. To the Old Camp (designed to host those more attached to reason) went prisoners in need of “expição do crime de memória”²⁴ (96), while the New Camp would wear down successfully collectivized men out of their strength and will, preventing them from developing a future. Past and future

²³ “The Director is the State, if the latter can be summarized in a single person”

²⁴ “expiation of the crime of memory”

become mere abstractions to a timeless State grounded in the self-perpetuating eternal time of the present²⁵:

O Director é um homem verdadeiramente enigmático. E também muito agarrado ao presente. Agarrado a ponto de convocar o passado e o futuro como instrumentos para a realização das obras do presente. Domina-os com segurança, como se dominasse dóceis animais domésticos. Para ele o tempo não passa de uma abstração, boa para manter os outros presos a ela e nada mais. O que verdadeiramente importa é o presente. O presente e o cumprimento do dever.²⁶ (140-141)

While Hegel's State is the actualization of the Idea, and therefore freedom, *Campo de Trânsito*'s version of state reveals itself to be a fictional projection that actualizes the freedom-through-reason objectified in the state's potential deviations by depicting the process of realization of this Idea from the point of view of an individual character, a constitutive trace of the novel itself. Such a perspective might point a critical finger at what is lost, and very often forgotten, in the dialectical process in which the State emerges as freedom after the surpassing of the subjective moment towards an objectified ethical construct of freedom and truth. The fact that Borges

²⁵ "The pallid shades of memory struggle in vain with the life and freedom of the Present". (Hegel *Phil. of History* 20)

²⁶ The Director is a truly puzzling man, and also very attached to the present. Attached to the point of using past and future as tools to carry out present deeds. He dominates both confidently, as if he dominated sweet pets. For him time is no more than an abstraction, good enough to keep others attached to it and nothing else. What really matters is the present. The present and the fulfillment of its duties"

Coelho's State is conceived as a prison complex already questions absolutisms by clearly relativizing the notion of freedom by its constitutive opposite, captivity. Actually, this is a fictional distortion of Hegel's philosophical conceptualizations, since his philosophy cannot be said to be represented in a projection in which the State denies the constitutive importance of individual freedom and subjective being. The State of *Campo*, therefore, irrational in Hegelian terms; and for this reason it cannot constitute the actualization of the ethical Idea. If anything, the novel points out the misuses of Hegelianism by totalitarian states for which "[s]ociety becomes an armed camp in the service of those great interests that have survived the economic competitive struggle" (Marcuse 410).

It is, thus, for its own present self-serving urgency that *Campo de Trânsito*'s totalitarian State manipulates the past and the future for profit, as we come to know that both camps are forced-labor camps. The Old Camp is a producer of truffles and the New Camp is a site for the extraction of naphtha. Equally, it is for the State's own self-serving needs that it manipulates the concepts of belonging and justice. While prisoners are presented with the idea of collectivity as a given, whose belonging is only possible through the complete abandoning of one's individuality, they are prepared for their role as controllable mass labor. The cancelation of individuality redefines the concept of justice to justify their captivity:

A justiça, caro 15.6, é uma categoria universal a que só por meio da colectividade se chega. A singularidade não passa de

uma fase transitória, antiquada, incapaz de estabelecer relação significativa com a justiça. A singularidade vem do tempo em que não havia justiça, o tempo da barbárie! Por conseguinte, 15.6, transforme-se primeiro, colectivize-se, e depois venha colocar-nos a questão da justiça! Teremos nessa altura todo o gosto em debatê-la!²⁷ (81)

Such a caricature of Hegel's conceptualization of justice completes the system of rules upon which the State rests in *Campo de Trânsito*. While the Hegelian proposal sustains that "[i]n the administration of justice, however, civil society returns to its concept, to the unity of the implicit universal with the subjective particular" (*Phil. of Right* 145), the complete cancelation of the subjective particular as proposed by the Director of the camps in the narrative spells out an error that leads to a totalitarian state of exception instead of the actualization of the ethical Idea. The all too familiar ease with which Borges Coelho conceives of a world structured upon the strategic slippage from the sublation into the subtraction of the subjective particular; and of the State as the universal Idea, whose very definition lies precisely over the notion of freedom – despite conceived in Hegelian terms – seems rather to invest on dialectics' constitutive strength or fragility featured in its actualization as, above all, discourse. An idea that, when

²⁷ Justice, my dear 15.6, is a universal category only reachable through collectivity. Singularity is nothing more than a transitory phase, outdated, incapable of establishing a meaningful relationship with justice. Singularity comes from a time in which there was no justice, the time of barbarisms! Therefore, 15.6, transform yourself first, become collective, and only then come to ask us about justice! Then we will gladly discuss it!

brought back to our transnational picture of imaginations of and from postcolonial States, charges the Hegelian distorted appropriation in Borges Coelho's novel with a critique that signals for the largely unnoticed changes of meaning, route and orientation materially verifiable in the conception of the State in postcoloniality.

2.1.2. *Tiara: State as power*

If *Campo de Trânsito* offers us an archetypal scheme of the State as a discursive actualization taking place in the space-time of entanglement of the postcolonial present, *Tiara*, 2001, by the Angola-born Guinean Filomena Embaló gives a more personal and historical account of the juxtaposition of times and practices in post-independence Africa. Similarly to its Mozambican counterpart, *Tiara* is also a novel suspended in time and space. An important difference, however, is the resources adopted to operate what seems to be a calculated distancing from reality. *Tiara* is set among fictional countries on an exclusively internal linear temporality whose progress is determined relationally in its self-contained fictional structure. Time in this novel is never marked by any mention of which year, but always in a relational manner that marks the amount of years between the fictional happenings. Through that, we witness twenty-four years of Tiara's life trajectory, starting, when she was eighteen years old, with her forced escape from her country at the brink of a civil war. She graduates, falls in love and marries. In her husband's country, she joins the liberation struggle. From that moment on, the novel's time is marked both by references to the

protagonist's journey and to her country's progress from struggle to independence. This feature that substantially differs from the focus on a timeless present in *Campo de Trânsito*, also differs – although to a lesser extent – from *Aurélia de Vento*'s internal temporality. The Santomean narrative focuses on the five-year present trajectory in the life of the protagonist rather than on her country's progress in historical time. Instead, Tiara's twenty-four-year trajectory runs parallel with her husband's country – Muriti – developing from its struggle for independence to its postcolonial consolidation.

Due to its structure, *Tiara* offers a much more historical account of the juxtaposed practices of the postcolonial state, articulating a critical approach to the pervasiveness of colonial racial logic in the anticolonial movement, its lingering in post-independent state apparatus as well as the betrayal of the national ideals that such practices entangles. Tiara's mixed racial condition, daughter of a white man and a black woman, was the reason why her family had to flee to exile. It remains an obstacle for her acceptance in her husband's country from the moment she arrives to join them on their struggle for independence:

– Kenum, porque é que as pessoas quando me vêem têm uma reacção... estranha?

– Por duas razões: A primeira é que não contavam ver-me casado tão de repente a segunda é, certamente, a tua cor. Aqui, no campo, não estão muito acostumados a ver

mestiços. Aliás, há muito pouca mestiçagem no Muriti. Em geral, ou se é preto ou se é branco... os mestiços são quase considerados acidentes de percurso... – disse, espicaçando a mulher.²⁸ (Emabló *Tiara* 139-140)

The argument of Kenun – Tiara's husband – is confirmed in the following pages, as the next scene shows his conversation with the general secretary of the liberation movement:

– Tenho notado uma certa... animosidade da tua parte, desde que regressei de Terra Branca. O que se passa?

. . .

– Queres realmente saber o que tenho contra ti? Gostaria de saber se no Muriti não havia mulheres suficientes para que tu fosses buscar uma lá fora!

– Ah! Então era isso?! Bem que eu devia ter desconfiado! A tua xenofobia não é segredo pra ninguém! Voltou-lhe as costas e encaminhou-se para a porta. Não iria perder tempo a discutir quinhas. . . . Apenas disse antes de sair:

– Um homem como tu não mereces o lugar que ocupas!

– Saiu, ciente de que tinha arranjado um inimigo na guerra, mas também para a paz.²⁹ (141-142)

²⁸ – Kenun, why is it that when people see me they have a reaction that is... strange? / – For two reasons: The first is that they did not count on seeing me married so suddenly and the second is, certainly, your color. Here, in the camp, they are not very used to seeing mestizos. By the way, there is very few mixing in Muriti. In general, one is either black or white... mestizos are almost considered a mishap... – he said, teasing his wife.

²⁹ – I have noticed a certain... animosity from you, since my return from Terra Branca. What is going on? / . . . / – Do you really want to know what I have against you? I would

And as we see throughout the novel, the animosity towards Tiara expressed by the adjunct general secretary Kito does not diminish. This animosity perpetrates the state apparatus of the postcolonial Murity as the members of the liberation movement form the political party that rules the fictional country for its first five years through a single-party State period. As a result of that, despite Tiara's clear professional capabilities, she is denied positions and intimidated within the state company she finally manages to work for. With the State in the hands of the Party – “Ele tem a maioria absoluta e dita as ordens que entender!”³⁰ (206) –, justice is not a possibility. Besides being a lawyer herself, Tiara knows she cannot fight such a powerful enemy – “Kenum tinha razão, seria uma guerra perdida de antemão.”³¹ (206) – and as the story proceeds to its end, the tone openly changes from hope to disillusionment. As the narrator puts it:

Os anos foram passando iguais uns aos outros. O país tinha feito muitos progressos, mas, como o decorrer do tempo, os ânimos foram-se acalmando. Já lá ia longe o tempo do trabalho militante, voluntário, dos primeiros anos de independência. Talvez por um certo desencanto de não se ter obtido o que se esperava com a independência. Sonho muito

like to know whether Muriti did not have enough women for you to make you go get one abroad! / – Ah! So that was it?! I should have known! Your xenophobia is not a secret! He turned his back and walked towards the door. He was not going to spend his time discussing that kind of thing . . . He only said before he left: / – A man like you does not deserve the position you have! / – He left, knowing that he had found himself an enemy for times of war and peace.

³⁰ “He has the absolute majority and dictates the orders he wills!”

³¹ “Kenum was right, the war would be lost before it even started”

altos tinham-se tornado inatingíveis. Talvez por serem utópicos ou talvez por não estarem a altura de consegui-los. O MLM [Movimento de Libertação do Muriti] acusava uma decadência. A corrupção tinha-se tornado prática corrente no seio dos seus dirigentes e os ideais revolucionários tinham dado lugar à luta pelos interesses pessoais. O aparelho do Estado também reflectia essa crise. Os partidos da oposição tinham dificuldade em afirmarem-se como forças catalisadoras para uma mudança, cada vez mais inelutável, por falta de uma estratégia adequada.³² (208)

Tiara's closing, marked by the protagonist's divorce – as she finds out her husband is lured by his mother into holding a traditional wife hidden in the village he came from – indicates her rupture with the present of the country she fought for and her retreat from public service to the interior – “Tenciono ir viver para a aldeia onde estive durante a Luta, quando cá cheguei.”³³ (259). An ending harboring another beginning, in which *Tiara's*

³² The years passed all alike. The country made much progress, but, with time, the spirits calmed down. The time of militant, volunteer work of the first years after independence was long past. Maybe because of a certain disillusionment due to not obtaining what was hoped for with independence. Big dreams had become unreachable. Maybe because of being too utopic or being too early in achieving them. The MLM [Movement for the Liberation of Muriti] shows signs of decay. Corruption had become an ordinary practice amongst its leaders and the revolutionary ideals had given place to personal interests. The State apparatus also reflected this crisis. The opposition parties had difficulty establishing themselves as means for change, every day more distant, due to the lack of adequate strategy.

³³ “I intend to come and live in the village where I have been during the Struggle, when I first arrived.”

life is no longer connected with the history of the country, leaving space for a pursuit of personal happiness suggested by the resurgence of her lover from adolescence in the last pages of the novel. A future with no resolution, no justice, no promise, in which the opportunity of a restart lies on the act of disengagement with the state; in which happiness can only be found in the individual, private sphere. A postcolonial novel pointing to the abandoning of the grand narrative?

2.1.4. Teoria Geral do Esquecimento: *State as performance*

Although it is probably not going that far, it is surely worth remarking on the radical power and critical productivity of postmodern aesthetics for internal discussions posed by certain pieces of postcolonial literature. While the erection of grand narratives was certainly an important feature of anticolonial nationalist struggles, since it has contributed to the rise of the national consciousness underlying the social union necessary to defeat the colonial enemy, it has also served to legitimize the State in its right to rule. Its importance to the legitimation of State is openly addressed by Lyotard on *The Postmodern Condition* when he says that “[t]he state spends large amounts of money to enable science to pass itself off as an epic: the State’s own credibility is based on that epic, which it uses to obtain the public consent its decision makers need.” (28). While these novels are not strictly postmodern narratives, what we observe is the existence of certain postmodern features. In their own way, each of them relativizes the

legitimacy of the State, “de-doxifyng” (Hutcheon, *Politics* 7) its almightiness and posing the possibility of its contestation. It points to the need of alternative imaginations of yet “unpresentable” (Lyotard 82), further participative modes of democracy.

It is due to its deconstructive agency and reconstructive possibilities that the fragmentation of the grand narrative is useful to *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*. Deployed as a structuring feature of the novel, fragmentation deploys the plot, the characters, the narrative perspective and the institutions. The story of the protagonist, the Portuguese Ludovica Fernandes Mano – or simply Ludo –, a woman who literally immured herself for twenty-eight years - sealing the door of her apartment in Luanda from 1975 to 2003, entangles with the bits and pieces of the other characters’ stories, which are themselves shattered, scrambled and reordered according to the revolutions inherent to the country’s historical circumstances.

In José Eduardo Agualusa’s fictional construct, the State is not conceived as an entire and complete self-standing institution. In a broken world whose pieces are organized by war – be it the struggle for independence or the civil war following it – the State as well as colonialism is where statists and colonialists are. The novel thus, foregrounds the people usually portrayed behind the institutions, but who are actually the body and arms of the regimes their actions institute. It is a strategy that bears a radical possibility, given its emphasis on individual agency, and by preferring to

focus on institutions' performative dimension. Once it restores the focus to the action, it foregrounds the personal dimension of those embodying the State, whose campaign of terror, historically – and fictionally – inscribed by the events of May 27th 1977 in Angola, is portrayed as a series of individual decisions between compliance and defiance; the liminal moments in which violence and peace, as well as revenge and forgiveness, are always present as attainable possibilities.

It can be said that all major characters in the novel undergo deep changes throughout the course of the narrative. Those changes, it could be argued, could have occurred as a direct result of the process of transformation undergone by the country itself in the course of almost thirty years covered by the story.

Após a morte do primeiro presidente, o regime ensaiou uma tímida abertura. Os presos políticos, não ligados à oposição armada, foram libertados. Alguns receberam convites para ocupar posições no aparelho do Estado.

...

[R]olaram anos. Caíram muros. Veio a paz, realizaram-se eleições, a guerra regressou. O sistema socialista foi desmantelado, *pelas mesmas pessoas que o haviam erguido*,

e o capitalismo ressurgiu das cinzas, mais feroz do que nunca.³⁴ (Aqualusa 90-91, my emphasis)

The narrative emphasis on agency, however, seems to suggest otherwise as shown by the disruption of the descriptive sequence on the opening of the country's regime, operated by the intrusive addition of adverbial information of *by whom*. The breakup, on the second paragraph, of the performative fact-making (ab)use of verbs in the passive voice, common practice in the literary addressing of the State as done on the first quoted paragraph, insinuates the significance of individual transformation for country change. A process which, when concerning the State, is clearly illustrated by the change undergone by *camarada* (comrade) Monte.

Magno Moreira Monte, is the embodiment of the iron hand of the revolutionary movement and of the State throughout the novel. He is the one whose story, similar to what happens to Ludo, is connected to all other characters'. At the brink of independence, Monte orders the execution of Jeremias Carrasco, a mercenary and deserted Capitan of the Portuguese army. After independence, Monte tortures and kills in the name of the regime, having arrested and "questioned" two other characters. Later, after the opening of the regime, Monte still attempts to kill the journalist Daniel Benchimol, although his accidental failure led him to murdering a French

³⁴ After the death of the first president, the regime experimented with a hesitant opening-up. Those political prisoners not linked to the armed opposition were released. Some received invitations to occupy positions in the apparatus of the State. / . . . / In the meantime, the years went by. The socialist system was dismantled by the very same people who had set it up, and capitalism rose from the ashes, as fierce as ever. (Hahn 90; 91)

writer instead. As the enforcement of the postcolonial regime is delegated to his hands, it is interesting to observe how Monte progresses from the remorseless killing of the Jeremias Carrasco – “[l]embra-me um tipo que conheci há muitos anos. Morreu. Uma pena, porque teria muito gosto em matá-lo outra vez.”³⁵(142) – to a more conscious and questioning approach to state violence until he finally quits “public” service. We first witness his discomfort with the memories of the witch-hunting perpetrated by him for the regime: “Monte não gostava de interrogatórios. Ainda hoje se esquia a falar sobre o assunto. Evita, inclusive, recordar os anos setenta, quando, para preservar a revolução socialista, se permitiram, utilizando um eufemismo grato aos agentes da polícia política, certos excessos.”³⁶ (65). Until we get to the point where we see a complete distancing between his job and his will:

Lá de cima – de algum gabinete faustoso e climatizado –
viera a ordem para silenciar um jornalista, Daniel Benchimol,
especializado em casos de desaparecimentos.

. . .

Ao receber a ordem para o silenciar, o detetive [Monte] não
conteve a revolta:

³⁵ “He reminds me of a guy I met many years ago. He died. A shame, as I’d have really liked to kill him again” (146)

³⁶ “Monte didn’t like interrogations. For years he avoided discussing the subject. He’d even avoided recalling the seventies, when in order to preserve the socialist revolution, certain excesses – to use an euphemism for which we’re indebted to the agents of the political police – were permitted.”(Hahn 63)

Este país está virado do avesso. Pagam os justos pelos pecadores.

A observação, dita em voz alta, firme, diante de dois generais, não caiu bem. Um deles empertigou-se:

O mundo evoluiu. O partido soube avançar com o mundo, modernizar-se e, por isso, ainda aqui estamos. O camarada devia refletir sobre o processo histórico. Estudar um pouco. Há quantos anos trabalha connosco? Desde sempre, penso. Acho demasiado tarde para se voltar contra nós.

O segundo general encolheu os ombros:

O camarada Monte gosta de provocar. Foi sempre assim, um agente provocador. Questão de estilo.

Monte conformou-se. *Cumprir* ordens. *Fazer cumprir* ordens. *Nisso se resumia, afinal, uma vida inteira.*³⁷ (151-152, my emphasis)

The gradual process of Monte's awareness is reached through the performatic repetition of orders that keeps him in the role of captive-captor

³⁷ From upstairs – some lavish, air-conditioned office – the order had come to silence a journalist, Daniel Benchimol, who was a specialist in disappearances./ . . . /When he received the order to silence him, the detective couldn't contain his disgust: 'This country's turned inside out. The just pay for the sinners.'/ This observation, made out loud in a confident voice in front of two generals, did not go down well. One of them straightened up: / 'The world has changed. The party knew how to progress along with the world, to modernise, and that's why we're still here. You ought to give some thought, comrade, to the historical process. Study a bit. How many years have you been working with us? Forever, right? I think it's too late for you to turn against us.'/ The second general shrugged: / 'Comrade Monte likes being provocative. He's always been like that, an agent provocateur. Just his style.'/ Monte got into line. Obeying orders. Giving orders. That was all a life added up to, after all. (Hahn 153-154)

within a system he no longer believes. As theorized by Homi Bhabha in “Dissemination: time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation”, the nation as discourse is only possible in the aporetic self-generative endeavor of double-time in which people are both active subjects and passive objects. A juxtaposition of the nation’s undeniable historical youth – as a political construct invented in modernity – translated into its constant present need of legitimization through the resignifying rescue of myths, and events capable of endowing it with a historical origin in any unmemorable the past. From such an inherent contradiction of the national discourse, says Bhabha, comes the tension between its people’s own performative and pedagogical function, the first consisting of the individual as active performer of a narrative tradition designed to fulfill the second, in which the people is to play the role of pedagogic object. The space “in-between” opened up by the intervention of the performatic thus, harbors the possibility of staging the same cultural difference the homogenizing national narrative is design to replace. If we change the focus of Bhabha’s theory from “the nation’s *self-generation*” (212) to the State as the enforcer of the national discourse within which the nation comes to exist³⁸, we can understand how Monte’s performance of obedient repetition rendered its own end: alienation³⁹ makes

³⁸ Although Bhabha’s focus on the nation as a discursive agent distances itself from “political languages” in order to “displace the historicism that has dominated discussions of the nation as a cultural force” (201) is of secondary importance, his occlusion of the role of the State as enforcer of national discourse blurs the power games at stake that are part and parcel of the process he theorizes.

³⁹ “The medium through which estrangement takes place is itself *practical*. Thus through estranged labor man not only creates his relationship to the object and to the act of production as to powers that are alien and hostile to him; he also creates the relationship in

room for the recuperation of the undecidable moment, always pregnant with the opportunity for change.

Change through transformation is this novel's incarnation of a becoming that touches every character, as it is built through every new decision. In that way Jeremias Carrasco is redeemed through the second chance offered by the benefactor figure of the ex-nun-now-nurse Madalena. She is a woman who, named after one of the most widely known symbols of Christian conversion from sin to virtue, chooses not to cast the first stone and helps the man – made mute by the bullet that should have killed him – to take refuge in the South of the country amidst the Mucubal people. It is there that Jeremias who, like the author of the biblical “Book of Lamentations” who witnesses the destruction of a city – Luanda –, becomes (St.) Jerónimo. He is the great translator whose masterpiece is his own silent rewriting from greedy Portuguese – “Combato pela civilização ocidental, contra o imperialismo soviético. Combato pela sobrevivência de Portugal.”⁴⁰ (33) – into conscious Mucubal. “[R]enascera não outra pessoa mas outras pessoas, um povo. Antes, ele era ele no meio dos outros. No melhor dos casos, ele, abraçado a outros. No deserto sentira-se pela primeira vez parte de um todo. . . . [U]m mucubal não existe sem os outros”⁴¹(221).

which other men stand to his production and to his product, and the relationship in which he stands to these other men.” (Marx 33)

⁴⁰ “I’m fighting for Western civilisation, against Soviet imperialism. I’m fighting for Portugal’s survival”(Hahn 25)

⁴¹ “In his isolation among the Mucubals, Jeremias had been reborn not as another person, but as many – as another people. Before then he had been surrounded by others. At the very

Ludo, likewise, undergoes a deep transformation as her fear and distance from Angola – “*Sinto medo do que está para além das janelas, do ar que entra às golfadas, e dos ruídos que traz. . . . Sou estrangeira a tudo, como uma ave caída na correnteza de um rio*”⁴² (37, emphasis in the original) – turns into her dwelling place, constituting her *heimlich* home – “Filha, esta é a minha terra. Já não me resta outra.”⁴³(208). The unbelievable course of her change resembles the accidental way in which her actions affect the other characters and the narrative as a whole. As her very name seems to conjure, Ludo is the sad joker in the pack. She is a pivotal character embodying the Portuguese flag-colored board game evoking the element of chance, breaking with the authority of predictable sequentiality. She is the unpredictable incarnation of providence and damnation, inadvertently interfering with the city from her Olympian cloister at the rooftop of the *Prédio dos Invejados* (Building of the Envid) where she locked herself in. Ludo is, at the same time, a Portuguese madwoman who feeds diamonds to pigeons and the Angolan goddess Kianda (deity to which a neighbor attributed the disappearance of a chicken Ludo stole), which “é uma entidade, uma energia capaz do bem e do mal”⁴⁴ (48).

best, he was an individual with his arms around others. In the desert, he felt for the first time as though he were a part of it all. . . . A Mucubal, too, can exist only with others” (29-230)

⁴² “I am afraid of what’s outside the window, of the air that arrives in bursts, and the noise it brings with it. . . . I am foreign to everything, like a bird that has fallen into the current of a river” (Hahn 31, emphasis of the original)

⁴³ ‘This is my country, child. I no longer have any other.’ (214)

⁴⁴ “is a being, an energy capable of good and evil.” (43)

From the conjunction of the elements of chance and power of will as structural elements, the narrative foregrounds the act of deciding on its myriad of open-ended possibilities that harbors the potential for war and destruction as well as for justice and reconciliation. By concentrating on the moment of decision, therefore rescuing the power of the undecidable moment, the narrative deconstructs the comforting idea of facelessness of institutions to the extent that it scales down their almightiness to the level of the everyday individual and the singular act of responsible choice. In such a universe, a better future in postcolonial time is encapsulated in a present individual action which, coming to terms with the past, can lead to a cathartic moment of justice. Once again, will meets chance, and at the climax of the narrative, Monte survives the attack perpetrated by one of his victims, who inadvertently, carry out his vengeful attempt with the help of a toy blade.

Monte, vendo-se cercado por Jeremias, António, Pequeno Soba, Daniel Benchimol e Nasser Evangelista, começou a recuar em direção às escadas:

Calma, calma, o que passou, passou. Somos todos angolanos.

Nasser Evangelista não o ouviu. Escutava os próprios gritos, um quarto de século antes, numa cela estreita, a cheirar a merda e a mijo [...]. Avançou dois passos e empurrou a lâmina de encontro ao peito de Monte.

Surpreendeu -se por não encontrar resistência. Repetiu o gesto uma e outra vez. O detetive cambaleou, muito pálido, e levou as mãos à camisa. Não viu sangue. As roupas estavam intactas. Jeremias agarrou Nasser pelos ombros e puxou-o para si. Daniel arrancou-lhe a navalha da mão:

É falsa. Graças a Deus, é uma faca de circo.

Assim era. A navalha possuía um cabo oco, com uma mola , para o qual a lâmina deslizava, escondendo-se, sempre que pressionada.

Daniel golpeou-se a si mesmo, no peito e no pescoço, para mostrar aos outros a falsidade da arma. A seguir saltou para cima de Jeremias. Esfaqueou Nasser. Ria alto, em gargalhadas amplas, histéricas, que os restantes acompanhavam. Também Ludo se ria, agarrada a Sabalu, as lágrimas correndo-lhe dos olhos.⁴⁵ (186-187)

The passage illustrates a failed lust for blood, resulting in a simultaneous burst of laughter and tears. It illustrates the symbolic act of justice required

⁴⁵ Finding himself surrounded by Jeremias, António, Little Chief, Daniel Benchimol and Nasser Evangelista, Monte began to back towards the staircase: / 'Take it easy, take it easy – what happened, happened. We're all of us Angolans.' / Nasser Evangelista didn't hear him. He heard only his own cries, a quarter of a century earlier, in a narrow cell that stank of shit and piss. . . . He took two steps forward and pressed the blade to Monte's chest. He was surprised to meet no resistance. He repeated the gesture again and again. The detective staggered, very pale, and brought his hands up to his shirt. He saw no blood. His clothes were intact. Jeremias took Nasser by the shoulders and pulled him towards himself. Daniel grabbed the knife from his hand./ 'It's fake, thank God. It's a circus knife.' / So it was. The knife had a hollow handle, with a spring, into which the blade slid, disappearing when something pushed against it./ Daniel stabbed himself in the chest and the neck to demonstrate to the others the fakeness of the weapon. Then he leaped onto Jeremias. He stabbed Nasser. He laughed a loud, big, hysterical laughter, and the others joined in. Ludo laughed too, holding on to Sabalu, tears running from her eyes (Hahn 193)

to proceed into the series of reconciliations with which the narrative concludes. Attained through the impact of personal change into social transformation, so does pain and despair, justice and reconciliation too, in *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*, constitute plausible possibilities for societies in which the State still has a major role.

2.1.5. Marginais: *State as ideological apparatus*

Marginais from the Cape Verdean Evel Rocha though, seems to test the limits of *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*'s empowering possibilities. Frequently regarded as "the success story of democratization in Africa" (Silva Andrade 271), Cape Verde is also the most liberal of the five Portuguese-speaking ones⁴⁶. Despite never turning its back completely on the capitalist world during the country's socialist experience between 1975-1991, under the PAIGV/PAICV government, it was the decade following the multiparty turn of 1991 that saw the rise of economic liberalism. As stated by Luís Batalha "[a]s MpD took power there was a shift toward privatization and market economy; the central role of the state in the economy was progressively replaced with new private initiative." (29). This

⁴⁶ The Cape Verdean resort to liberalism is deeply connected with the country's feeble economic conditions related to the lack of natural resources and climatic conditions subject to long periods of draught which, allied to the colonial underdevelopment of which it was victim, posed great challenges to its postcolonial government's ability to feed its population. The country then was largely dependent on financial aid, accepting both socialist and capitalist contributions in addition to the contributions sent by Cape Verdean émigrés, who were compelled to leave for better economic prospects, and who were mostly located in the capitalist-oriented U.S. and Western Europe. Later, argues Patrick Chabal, the Cape Verdean emigrants abroad had played a crucial role in voting the left-wing PAICV out of office and electing the openly liberal economic proposal of the MpD. (*A History* 93)

is the economic environment framing the social background of misery, abuse and dispossession in which the narrative of Sérgio do Rosário Araújo, or Sérgio Pitboy is set.

Sérgio was born and bred on the Island of Sal in Cape Verde – “Sal foi sempre o teatro da minha existência”⁴⁷ (Rocha 34). The novel is his first-person account of a miserable and marginalized life, from childhood through adolescence until the eve of his death. He casually meets an old school colleague, then a successful engineer, to whom Sérgio gives his handwritten memoir as he feels death approaching. This former colleague, who is the editor of Sérgio’s story, openly intervenes in the narrative in two clearly marked moments: at the beginning, before the opening of the story, when he introduces Sérgio and describes their encounter; and at the very end, reporting the protagonist’s suicide and the revelation that takes place at his burial – the fact that his neighbors’ 12 year-old daughter, whose sad debut into the world of misery and sexual abuse is Sérgio’s last example of disgrace, is actually his daughter. Despite being modified – as the fictional editor admits to intervening in the text “tomei a iniciativa de substituir algumas passagens . . . [a]lguns trechos foram suprimidos por serem demasiados realistas e por descreverem factos que poderiam pôr em causa a dignidade de muitas pessoas da ilha”⁴⁸(13) – the narrative that unfolds is

⁴⁷ “Sal has ever been the theatre of my existence”

⁴⁸ “I took the initiative to replace some brief parts . . . some passages were suppressed for being too realistic and for bringing up facts that could contest the dignity of many people on the island”

loaded with vividly narrated scenes of physical, sexual and psychological violence, seasoned with generous doses of filth, abuse and scatology. It is a linguistic creation that is deeply grounded on a social critique which, as we come to know by the fictional account of the meeting between author and editor, is intentional: “Aqui, procurei descrever os dois mundos onde vivi comprimido: o mundo da pobreza e dos abastados, como alguns chamam, mas para mim são os mundos dos exploradores e explorados”⁴⁹ (13).

Driven by class struggle, those sharing with Sérgio the world of *Marginais* are confronted with a State whose role in the class struggle is that of a gatekeeper, making sure the poor remain poor, uneducated and hungry. It is a means through which the dominant classes are provided with a multitude of heavily deprived people desperate enough to let themselves be exploited. Through the combination of a systemic and subjective approach towards the society of the Aspargos neighborhood, Sérgio provides a searing critique of the political and economic order. At the same time, he takes us on a very realistic journey through the subjectivity of his fellow “marginals”. The materialist critique is inherent within the novel’s aesthetics as characters are vividly written in their individualities within a fierce battle between the power of will and social determination that is heavily protected by the State.

⁴⁹ “Here, I have tried to describe the two worlds between which I am squeezed: the world of poverty and the world of the wealthy, as some call it, but for me they are the world of exploiters and exploited”

Sérgio grew up on a street that is “de terra solta e ferros velhos, crateras onde se amontoavam lixos varridos pelo vento e poças de água de esfregadura misturada com urina que as mulheres despejavam na calada da noite”⁵⁰. His toys consisted of items found amidst the garbage – “[o]uvíamos dizer que o lixo era prejudicial à saúde, que tinha doenças infecciosas, mas nesse fundo que encontrávamos nossos brinquedos”⁵¹ (Rocha 19). He has an unreliable father and a mother who made scarce earnings by working as a washerwoman. He could barely eat, which pushed him into stealing eggs - his first crime. Nevertheless, as Sérgio himself writes in his memoir, “[t]eimosamente, soubemos sobreviver à desigualdade que havia entre nós e filhos de pais abastados, contudo, na nossa adolescência e juventude não soubemos superar essa mesma desigualdade”⁵² (20).

The gap between the rich and those marginalized in poverty is indeed way too big. The State institutions make sure to keep this status quo. Sérgio’s first class on democracy happened at primary school where he was voted to represent his class during an event. Yet, he was denied the position by his Portuguese teacher who “declarou que os votos atribuídos aos Sérgio do Rosário não contavam. Não faz sentido eleger um indisciplinado, um

⁵⁰ “unpaved and full of scraps, craters where the garbage brought by the winds amassed and puddles of dirty water mixed with the piss that women threw there in the dead of the night”

⁵¹ “we heard that garbage is bad for your health, that it was full of infectious diseases, but it was there that we found our toys”

⁵² “stubbornly, we managed to survive the inequality that existed between us and the kids of wealthy parents. However, during our adolescence and youth we could not get over the very same inequality”

bandido para representar a turma”⁵³ (56). What he learned then was that “a escola é o centro de formação do carácter de um homem, mas é, acima de tudo, o lugar onde aprendemos o ódio, a desigualdade e passamos a compreender que pobreza é uma doença incurável”⁵⁴ (55). The election was made to teach the young students how to vote, given the country’s first steps into multiparty democracy; but the lesson really given was that, despite the will of the majority, power can only be shared with those chosen by the ones already in power and who will, therefore, commit to protect the current status quo. That was the case with the Portuguese language teacher who preferred to appoint the wealthy blue-eyed blond daughter of a European merchant, than to recognize the representative rights given to a deprived local such as Sérgio.

The importance of the school’s role in the reproduction of the systems of production and, therefore, of the main instrument of the Ideological State Apparatus, is discussed at length by Louis Althusser in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus (Notes Towards and Investigation)”. Drawing on the understanding of State Apparatus as a repressive apparatus composed of the police, the courts, prisons, and by the government itself, Althusser advances his argument by proposing this apparatus’ twofold structure: the Repressive State Apparatus and the

⁵³ “declared that the votes given to Sérgio do Rosário did not count for anything. It does not make sense to elect an unruly, a thug, to represent the class”

⁵⁴ “the school is the center of formation of the character of a man, but it is, above all, where we learn hate, inequality and where we come to understand that poverty is an incurable disease”

Ideological State Apparatus. While both structures work in tandem – as it is impossible to fixate ideology without the aid of violence and vice versa – their difference would reside in their primary way of functioning, which would either be by violence or by ideology. Thus, the Repressive State Apparatus, located in the public domain, encompasses the organs that function by violence, such as the police and the army; while the Ideological State Apparatus, located both in the public and the private domain, includes a multiplicity of organs that functions by ideology such as the church, the family, cultural ventures, the legal system, politics and most importantly the school, which according to Althusser:

takes children from every class at infant-school age, and then for years, the years in which the child is most 'vulnerable', squeezed between the family State apparatus and the educational State apparatus, it drums into them, whether it uses new or old methods, a certain amount of 'know-how' wrapped in the ruling ideology (French, arithmetic, natural history, the sciences, literature) or simply the ruling ideology in its pure state (ethics, civic instruction, philosophy). Somewhere around the age of sixteen, a huge mass of children are ejected 'into production': these are the workers or small peasants.

. . . .

Each mass ejected *en route* is practically provided with the ideology which suits the role it has to fulfil in class society: the role of the exploited (with a 'highly-developed' 'professional', 'ethical', 'civic', 'national' and a-political consciousness); the role of the agent of exploitation (ability to give the workers orders and speak to them : 'human relations'), of the agent of repression (ability to give orders and enforce obedience 'without discussion', or ability to manipulate the demagogy of a political leader's rhetoric), or of the professional ideologist (ability to treat consciousnesses with the respect, i.e. with the contempt, blackmail, and demagogy they deserve, adapted to the accents of Morality, of Virtue, of 'Transcendence', of the Nation, of France's World Role, etc.). (Althusser 155-156)

The school is the inculcator of the ideology of the ruling classes' relations of production. It does so by subjecting individuals from an early age to the performative reproduction of their predetermined roles as exploiters or exploited. We can say that Althusser's definition of the school's central role in the reproduction of the system of production in capitalist societies certainly applies to the conceptualization of the educational system in *Marginais*. Despite being conjugated with the more visible effects of the Repressive State Apparatus, which will be analyzed in more detail in the following chapter, it is interesting to remark that the emphasis given to the

often unperceived, yet determinant, part of the Ideological State Apparatus in the process of exclusion and marginalization is the part that assures the prevalence of the system of exploitation. Encompassing one third of the narrative, Sérgio's childhood and early adolescence's educative process within these institutions and on the streets of his neighborhood will, to a large extent, determine his fate and deeds.

Nonetheless Sérgio seems to be, at least by the time he writes his memoir, conscious of the educational system's influence in the shaping of society's hierarchical relations. We can note that in the way he recalls his time in school. About his confrontation with the school as system of privilege, he writes:

Na escola ou em qualquer lugar tínhamos um tratamento diferenciado em relação aos filhos dos engomados que exerciam cargo de destaque na zona do Aeroporto. No final do ano tínhamos notas mais baixas. Nós nascíamos com a marca da besta, carregando a sina do fracasso na escola. Não faltava alguém para nos lembrar da nossa condição e, bem cedo, comecei a odiar todos aqueles que feriam a minha integridade. A escola, tão apregoadado centro de continuidade no processo da socialização, não passa de um centro autoritário, um campo de concentração que exerce a violência selectiva sobre os desfavorecidos e esquece que cada dia nas nossas vidas é um marco de sobrevivência. A

escola ensinou-me que sou um indivíduo incapaz e predestinado a ser ruim. Os professores não fazem ideia do que é ir à escola de estômago vazio, de ter que aturar cinco aulas de bombardeamento de inutilidades, enquanto o estômago troveja, de ter que enfrentar uma turma de preconceituosos e bem comportados e de lutar contra o próprio pensamento que insiste em planejar um furto para enganar a fome.⁵⁵ (Rocha, 42)

In the same way, it is Sérgio's consciousness that will prevent him from fulfilling his social destiny which follows a route of institutionalized exploitation as part of a cheap immigrant workforce, as did his mother who migrated to Europe to live up to hers. She wanted Sérgio to conform and to become a lawyer. He wanted to stand out and become a soccer player, but the system of privilege supported by State institutions wanted him to become a marginal, as marginals too have a role in deeply unequal societies.

Here, although different from Althusser's examination of those who are successfully educated into the bourgeois ideology, Sérgio's non-

⁵⁵ At school or anywhere we were treated differently than the kids of the poncy people who had good jobs in the Airport area. At the end of the school year we had the lower grades. We were born with the mark of the beast, carrying the fate of school failure. There was always someone to remind us of our condition and, quite early on, I have begun to hate all those who harmed my integrity. The school, that famous center of continuity in the socialization process, is nothing but an authoritarian center, a concentration camp exercising selective violence over the underprivileged and forgets that, every day in our lives is a milestone of survival. School taught me that I am an incapable individual destined to be evil. Teachers have no idea of how it feels to go to school with an empty stomach, to have to face five classes of uselessness, while the stomach rumbles, of how it is to face a bunch of well-behaved and prejudiced classmates and to fight your own mind that insists in planning a theft to ease hunger.

conformity and challenging spirit that kept him from embodying the role of the exploited did not save him from the entrapment of an underprivileged social fate. If by the age of sixteen he was not “ejected into production”, he was in any case homeless and on his own – “Com quase dezesseis anos, eu estava entregue a mim mesmo”⁵⁶ (76). Marginal to the legal side of the system, Sérgio was ready to be absorbed into its illegal mechanisms, into the underworld of global capitalism in the industry of tourism where people like him would serve as livestock for human trafficking, defenseless and unwilling suppliers in the trade of human organs and tissues or, more commonly, as the exploited workforce in drug trafficking or prostitution conveniently disguised as a booming “industry of entertainment”- a site of entanglement between capitalism and culture.

Culture, thus, is portrayed in the novel as a redemptive horizon for Sérgio in his many attempts to escape the social determination of which he is a victim. His talent as a teenage soccer player almost had him hired by a Portuguese team, an attempt that failed due to his debilitating physical condition, the collateral damage of his life in poverty. Similarly, his later endeavor in the world of the music, as a singer at bars and restaurants entertaining the tourists of the island, is frustrated just before he had the chance to make his first record by a belated arrest related to his earlier involvement in drug trafficking. As talented as Sérgio and his friends were,

⁵⁶ “At almost sixteen, I was left on my own”

culture too is an organization of social life that they are forbidden to join as his remarks concerning the literary potential of a friend indicate:

Lela foi o maior poeta marginal dessas ilhas! É pena que os jornais não publiquem seus poemas. Os jornais estão cheios de parvoíces que os editores, numa hipocrisia deslavada e gananciosa, destacam de uma forma leviana. É ministro-poeta versando mediocridades, é militante-contador-de-histórias que escreve antologias de ignorância e é levado para a televisão para falar de cultura.⁵⁷ (Rocha 199)

Culture then shows itself in its true colors as just another institution belonging to the Ideological State Apparatus. It functions as a resource at the service of the ex-revolutionary bourgeoisie who are in control of State power. Culture promotes the values of the class that retains the available political and economic means to successfully reproduce, at the cultural level, the system of production based on the invisibility of exploitation. By turning its back on the artistic manifestation of those deprived of power, culture makes them invisible to the same extent that, by preventing the surfacing of any competing aesthetics, it plays its role in maintaining the status quo.

⁵⁷ Lela was the greatest marginal poet of these islands! It is pity that the newspapers didn't publish his poems. Newspapers are full of stupidities that the editors, full of greed and hypocrisy, highlight with flippancy. It is the poet-minister rhyming mediocrities, it is the storyteller-militant who writes anthologies of ignorance and who takes to TV to talk about culture.

Another institution belonging to the Ideological State Apparatus that is extensively present throughout the novel is the legal system. Although, as Althusser indicates (143), the law also belongs to the Repressive State Apparatus, the legal system in *Marginais* is written as a set of rules and laws that, conjugated with politics, are made not only to exclude the poor, but to marginalize any aspect of the lives that they are pushed into living. Law and politics in the novel, united by the character of Sérgio's antagonist, the reputable lawyer, politician and family man Dr. Apolinário, are projected as ideological institutions of exclusion and de-humanization guaranteeing just the right amount of injustice to, on the one hand, keep the rich's wealth and influence and on the other hand, keep the poor helpless enough to serve as labor hand to the rich's dirty business – “Nesta terra, só vai para a cadeia ladão de galinha e filho de pobre”⁵⁸ (Rocha, 2006).

As law and politics are not there to promote justice, Sérgio finds his own ways to get even through revenge. Resistance is then projected into the character's small acts of civil disobedience, performed either alone or in a group (with his gang, the Pitboys, a pun with the word “Pit bull”). Sérgio's vengeful and non-lethal attempts against the various humiliations imposed by Dr. Apolinário serve as micro-cathartic opportunities necessary for the protagonist and his friends to have the strength to go on. His sympathies for other marginalized beings such as prostitutes, gamblers, madmen and

⁵⁸ “In this land, only petty thieves and poor men's children go to jail”

thieves underlines a sense of relative solidarity needed to compensate for the lack of social justice that politicians are not willing to promote.

Even though it is right to conclude that *Marginais* denounces the tragic human costs of social determinism in capitalist societies – even by those run by a class of governors who like to call each other “comrades” – it is possible to state that the novel is also a narrative of resistance. Aside from the story’s emphasis on the systematic nature of economic and social exclusion, promoted not only by the public set of institutions composing the Repressive State Apparatus, but also by the various organizations belonging to civil society that comprise the Ideological State Apparatus, and despite the protagonist’s premature death, his trajectory is still permeated by small initiatives of resistance which call our attention to the difference one can make. His tragic fate does not stop the reach of his narrative, which reverberates already within the diegetic sphere as it moves the engineer who receives his accounts enough to publish them. More than just locating the State within class struggle, Rocha’s narrative brings up the voice of those marginalized by the system. By doing so, Rocha indicates how marginality, precisely by being outside or just beyond and therefore out of the systematic control exerted by State institutions, is empowered in its real function within the system. In its determining opposite to State institutions, the margin constitutes a place of resistance.

2.2. *Conclusion: from national to political and social conscience – a pursuit for justice*

Following an interpretative pathway that sees the five novels in our study in dialogue with their time and place of production, we can assert that they indicate a literary shift from the national to the political and social aspects of their respective postcolonial space and time. A change of perspective which, as our corpus seems to demonstrate, is made rather smoothly in the form of contingent historical transitions in the light of post-independence developments. Each novel seems, in its own way, to put the project of national consciousness in perspective, which in relation to their respective local histories appears to point to the movement towards political and social awareness as a further stage of their postcoloniality.

Aurélia de Vento, for example, clearly actualizes this transitional moment through the parallelism of the characters of Minister Ventura and San Labeca, the mother of the minister's assistant. Further into São Tomé and Príncipe's post-independence period, San Labeca's nationalism is described as fanatic and her manners authoritarian. Due to her stubborn position, she is incapable of connecting to a younger generation concerned with the problems inherent to the postcoloniality of the country. Antagonizing the political orientation of the protagonist of the story, but lacking the flexibility underlying Minister Ventura's political capabilities, San Labeca's death in the story seems to be a necessary development to

match the hopeful tone of a narrative in which even the State cannot escape the rightful power of justice through law.

In a similar way, characters who fail to abandon the Manichean logic of an “us versus them” characteristic of an initial moment of postcoloniality in *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento* and *Campo de Trânsito* were also sacrificed. While in *Teoria*, Monte’s death at the end of the novel liquidates the existence of the only character in the story who fails to liberate himself and to be reborn through the cathartic moment which closes the narrative, in *Campo*, the death of the Director eliminates the one character who misappropriates, on behalf of the State, the discourse of collectivity and the discourse of belonging. Although both novels relate to the history of their countries in quite diverse ways – Agualusa makes direct allusions to it while Borges Coelho systematically avoids them –, the deaths in both narratives do not seem to refer to a fall of the State as such, since in both stories the State goes on unharmed. We should not forget that despite the Director’s embodiment of the State in *Campo*, it is actually Mungau’s remaining a prisoner through his transfer at the end of the novel that asserts the permanence of the State. What the deaths of San Labeca, Monte and the Director seem to indicate is a transition away from practices connected to nationalist ideology, namely the use of national discourse as a pretext for violating individual political and economic rights.

Despite the differences in the ways *Tiara* and *Marginais* seem to bring about this shift in consciousness, they still relate to each other as much

as to the other three narratives comprised in this study. The diametric oppositions between the situation of Tiara and Sérgio in the societies they belong to sets them at opposite ends of the same continuum. Even though Tiara is educated, well fed and healthy – three conditions Sérgio does not share –, both narratives are told from the point of view of the underprivileged, as their respective protagonists are social outcasts. Tiara is a foreign, mixed-race woman engaged in a traditional, racist and sexist anticolonial nationalist movement. Sérgio is a poor black, outraged young man inserted into a heavily unequal and unfair post-independent society. Tiara's narrative is concerned with an earlier stage of her society's postcoloniality and centered on a sensitive analysis of the anticolonial nationalist movement, its struggle and its takeover of power after independence. Sérgio's story, on the other hand, focuses on the aftermath of independence in a similarly postcolonial country, as he is born in 1977, after his country's independence. He provides us with a complementary picture of the outcomes of the exclusionary practices put in place by the revolutionary elite who appropriated national discourse to monopolize the steering and the resources of the country.

In a less positive tone, in comparison to the other three narratives analyzed – as, by the end of their respective stories, Sérgio dies and Tiara is forced to abandon a lifelong political and social project –, although *Tiara* and *Marginais* do not point, at a diegetic level, to a transition away from the misuse of national discourse, they certainly show its unfolding from its

establishment to its outcomes. *Tiara* describes the details of the misappropriation of national discourse within the transition of the anticolonial nationalistic movement into State-party. *Marginais* offers us an account of the legacy of social injustice and human calamity brought about by problematic revolutionary governments in the aftermath of socialist single-party State regimes. While in these two novels the shift from national to political and social consciousness seems not to be shared by many in the societies they portray as can be seen in *Aurélia de Vento*, *Campo de Trânsito* and *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*, this awareness is the very standpoint from which Sérgio and Tiara embark on their respective narratives, marking the literary shift from national to political and social consciousness in the African literatures written in Portuguese.

Another aspect that links these five novels and which underscores their turn from national to political and social consciousness is their thematization of justice, law and the relation between the two – something that John and Jean Comaroff have called “the fetishism of the law” in the postcolony – a place in which “[t]he court has become a utopic institutional site to which human agency may turn for a medium in which to achieve its ends” (33). It is interesting to note how, in three of the five novels of our corpus, the court is regarded as the site of justice against the misdeeds of the State.

In *Aurélia de Vento*, we follow the development of the court case of Pedro Santos against the State. We witness justice unfolding as the farmer

wins the dispute. His rightful ownership of the farm is secured and he is protected by justice from State abuse. It is this legal apparatus that Sérgio's mother seeks when she reaches out to the local lawyer for help to denounce the sexual violence perpetrated by the police – the state repressive apparatus – against her son and his friend. However, although in the Santomean *Aurélia*, the best lawyer in town picks the side of the weak by refusing to represent the State against the farmer, in the Cape Verdean *Marginais*, the lawyer in question denies Sérgio's mother any help and humiliates Sérgio, forcing his mother to file a complaint directly to the courthouse, which is never further investigated. Comparing these two projections of the courtroom into fiction, we see that while the attainment of justice in *Aurélia* adds an important note of hope to a narrative whose conclusion signals the establishment of a social order permeated by justice and law, its denial in *Marginais* marks the turning moment in which Sérgio embraces being an outlaw and marginality:

Infelizmente, o advogado recusou abrir-nos a porta para não sujar a sua alcatifa e disse à mamãe que fosse no dia seguinte apresentar queixa ao juiz. Ao passar debaixo da janela da casa do doutor fui atingido por um escarro quente no pescoço. Olhei para cima e vi seu rosto cínico num riso amarelo e insultuoso a fechar as persianas. Até hoje sinto uma queimadura de repugnância no pescoço por aquele malvado. A cuspidela foi uma ferida aberta na minha honra

que só haveria de curar com vingança. A minha revolta contra a prepotência daquele homem desalmado e mal agradecido aumentava de uma forma assustadora. *Aquele momento marcou uma viragem radical na minha vida. . . .* Mamãe apresentou queixa no tribunal. Ela, de tempos em tempos, aparecia no tribunal e voltava sempre com a promessa de que tudo se resolveria a favor das vítimas. *Decididamente, isolei-me do mundo e procurei refúgio entre os marginais.*⁵⁹ (Rocha 61-62, my emphasis)

The next novel that mentions a formal resort to the legal system in the pursuit of justice is *Tiara*. Despite its reduced prominence, the courtroom is still regarded as the last alternative in the protagonist's quest to obtain justice. As discussed previously, Tiara chooses not to go to court against the State to fight the racism of which she is a victim because she is convinced that the complicity between politics and the legal system will prevent any attainment of justice for her. This perception clearly foregrounds the entanglement between the political and the legal which is

⁵⁹ Unfortunately, the lawyer refused to open the door for us to avoid his carpet getting dirty and told mom to go and press charges to the judge the next day. When I passed underneath the window of the lawyer's house, I was hit by a warm gob of spit in the neck. I looked up and saw his cynical face with a yellow and insulting smile closing the shutters. Up to this day, I feel a burn of disgust in the neck for that beast. The spit was a wound in my honor that can only heal with vengeance. My revolt against that soulless and ungrateful man increased incredibly. *That moment marked a radical turnaround in my life. . . .* Mum pressed charges at the tribunal. She would, from time to time, show up there and would always come back with the same promise that everything would be solved in favor of the victims. *Decidedly, I withdrew from the world and sought refuge amongst marginals.* (my emphasis)

latent in both *Aurélia de Vento* and *Marginais*. It is a relation that is further thematized in *Campo de Trânsito* and *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*.

If we go back to Jean and John Comaroff, a reading of the courtroom as a resource of hope for the weak in the postcolony has to be understood in terms of the displacement of the political into the legal at a time in which the nation-state is moving away from the idea of homogeneous unity towards a politics of identity difference. They argue that in situations such as these, legal instruments offer “a repertoire of more or less standardized terms and practices that permit the negotiations of values, beliefs, ideals, and interests across otherwise-impermeable lines of cleavage” (32) within a society. Even though the matter is certainly connected to an ongoing process of change that pushes for the pluralization of the notion of the nation-state that is traditionally conceived as a single, ethnical and culturally cohesive imagined community – as the white ex-settler Pedro Santos’ triumph in court against the State in *Aurélia* shows –, one could additionally propose that the rise of the court in postcolonial fictional projections, at least in terms of Portuguese-speaking postcolonial Africa, is rooted in a more systemic and fundamentally constitutive level.

Justice was certainly one of the most moving motifs of the anticolonial nationalist movement that shook Portuguese dominance in Africa. The pursuit of the right to sovereignty and self-determination in the political and economic realm by armed independence movements was also a pursuit for justice through law. As an expert on public law, Martin Loughlin

puts it: “[s]overeignty expresses the principle of external independence, internal authority, and ultimate legal supremacy of the State. A people occupying a defined territory and equipped with institutional self-rule presents itself as a sovereign entity, signifying independence from subjection to any higher authority” (44). Sovereignty, thus, is the political and legal condition that allows the postcolonies to exist as equally independent countries in the international arena. Furthermore, it is the acquisition of this right that allows a postcolonial State to govern through law since “[t]here can be no limitations on a [sovereign] State’s authority to rule by the means of law” (44). Law, then, presents itself as one of the tools for the making of the State through which it ratifies its existence towards other States, instituting it as such and, at the same time, constituting the means by which it can legislate and govern its people. This explains why the courtroom would be the place in which one could imagine coming to terms with justice in this type of postcolony. If the achievement of justice is directly connected with the application of the law, and the law is what defines the sovereign State, to deny the law’s justice-making authority is to deny the very possibility of legitimacy and recognition of the State. It is for this reason that the courtroom seems to be a place where justice is rarely within reach, as we can see in *Campo de Trânsito* and *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*.

The greatest commonality between the Mozambican and the Angolan novels is certainly the State of exception underlying both their

histories and their fiction. *Campo Trânsito* – set in a camp, the space of exception *par excellence* – brings to attention the gruesome implications of the subordination of law to political power that allows the distortion of justice, as shown previously in this chapter. The discursive nature of the actualization of the State is especially visible when we consider that both State sovereignty and State governability are enacted through the manipulation and deployment of the law, which is but discourse after all. As Agamben claims: “This is why in the camp the *quaestio iuris* is, if we look carefully, no longer strictly distinguishable from the *quaestio foeti*, and in this sense every question concerning the legality or illegality of what happened there simply makes no sense. *The camp is a hybrid of law and fact in which the two terms have become indistinguishable*” (*Homo Sacer* 170).

While the archetypical structure of *Campo* compels us to ponder the implications of the inherent possibilities of slippage of an Idea(l)-State into a totalitarian State of Exception, the approach of *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento* to the theme attaining justice through law is certainly more concrete. As Agualusa’s novel is set against the background of almost three decades of civil war – that point of imbalance between public law and political fact which is the same point of imbalance that institutes the state of exception (Agamben, *State of Exception* 1) – justice is impossible in the realm where the law is being held hostage by the sovereign State power (and will). It is for this reason that justice in *Teoria* never finds its way into a courtroom. Rather, it is found in the hallway of an apartment building where

judgment, verdict and punishment are enacted and reconciliation is achieved through dramatic catharsis.

Each of the five novels studied gives way to social projections in which the pursuit for justice though law is clearly thematized and skillfully elaborated. Whereas *Aurélia de Vento*, *Tiara* and *Marginais* seem to propose a reflection over instituted and operating postcolonial legal systems, *Campo de Trânsito* and *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento* lead us to ponder over the implications of the establishment of such a legal system. These narratives point clearly to the subordination of the law and, with it, the possibility of justice, to political power. It is a relationship which, as we are reminded by Jean and John Comaroff, has been defined by Walter Benjamin as intrinsic and generative of violence: “Lawmaking is power making and, to that extent, an immediate manifestation of violence” (Benjamin, “Critique of Violence” 295), violence being the phenomenon that will be further analyzed in our next chapter.

Chapter 3

The Weapon of Violence

Force is the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with a new one. It is itself an economic power.

Karl Marx, *Capital Vol.I*

Se aceitarmos o princípio de que a luta de libertação nacional é uma revolução, e que ela não acaba no momento em que se toca o hino nacional, veremos que não há nem pode haver libertação nacional sem o uso da violência libertadora, por parte das forças nacionalistas, para responder à violência criminosa dos agentes do imperialismo.¹

Amílcar Cabral, “A Arma da Teoria”

Anyone studying African postcolonial societies knows Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*’s opening line: “decolonization is always a violent phenomenon” (27). More than an ideological positioning, history has shown that the adoption of violence constituted a concrete means for anticolonial nationalistic movements throughout the continent.

¹ If we accept the principle that the national liberation struggle is a revolution, and that it is not over at the moment when the flag is hoisted and the national anthem is played, we shall find that there is and there can be no national liberation without the use of liberating violence, on the part of the nationalist forces, in answer to the criminal violence of the agents of imperialism. (Wolfers 134)

Nonetheless, even though the independence of the African countries that faced Portuguese colonialism was deeply marked by an actual war in which thousands of lives were lost, the most renowned work of one of its greatest articulators and theoreticians, Amílcar Cabral, is characterized by a concern with the role of local culture that has set the pace for local literary production as much as for postcolonial criticisms of it.

The celebration of Amílcar Cabral's idea of "A arma da teoria"² ("The weapon of theory"), often reinforces the culturalist aspect of the anticolonial revolutionary movements active in Portuguese-speaking Africa. While it is true that Cabral's ground-breaking statement, "a libertação nacional e a revolução social não são mercadorias de exportação. São (e serão cada dia mais) um produto de elaboração local – nacional"³ (175), condenses the view of anti-colonial revolutionary struggle that underlies his later works such as "O papel da cultura na luta pela independência" ("National liberation and culture"; Wolfers 138), originally from 1972, his work is not restricted to it. It is important to recall that, in the same "A arma da teoria", Cabral wrote an important section on the role of violence where

² Text first delivered as a speech on the occasion of the I Conference of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America, in Havana, in January of 1966. Its original title is "Fundamentos e objectivos da libertação nacional em relação com a estrutura social" – "Presuppositions and objectives of national liberation in relation to social structure" (Wolfers).

³ "national liberation and social revolutions are not exportable commodities. They are (and increasingly so every day) a local, national" (Wolfers 122).

he affirms that “a única via eficaz para a realização cabal e definitiva das aspirações dos povos à libertação nacional é a luta armada”⁴ (197).

Yet, accounts such as the one by Robert Young in his *Postcolonialism: A Historical Introduction* (283-292), which imply a connection of the thought of Fanon with violence and of the thought of Cabral with culture, mask the importance of violence as the weapon of choice of revolutionary parties in Portuguese-speaking Africa, along with its lingering utility in the aftermath of independence. Therefore, in an attempt to understand how the development of violence unfolds from anticolonial struggle to the contemporary postcolonial setting, this chapter does not share the abovementioned view, which is a recurring and misleading position in the field. For whilst the recognition of the importance of violence in Fanon’s writings reiterates the violent nature of the French colonial enterprise in Algeria, the downplaying of this aspect of Cabral’s writings runs the risk of abiding by the same logic of domination of the late days of the Portuguese colonial enterprise: lusotropicalist discourse.

With that in mind, our proposal here is, following the advice of Robert Blackey (191-209), to understand the work of both intellectuals as complementary not only when it comes to theories of African revolutions, but mainly when it comes to the understanding of the central role that violence has in it. This epistemological option allows us to react more

⁴ “the only effective way of completely and definitively fulfilling the aspirations of peoples for national liberation is by armed struggle” (Wolfers 134).

productively to a relative absence of studies dedicated to the analysis of the structural role of violence in the field which, when conceived, usually limits itself to the acknowledgement of violence as a topical circumstance or historical fact. Hence, given our understanding of the postcolonial as a relationship in the *longue durée* of history, our focus rests on the *weapon of violence*; a tool without which no theory seems to have been able to hit its target in postcolonial Portuguese-speaking Africa.

Due to the circumstances surrounding the environment of our coups, still very much influenced by the power of a dominant class that rose to political power after the end of colonialism, our starting point into the representation of violence in the literatures of contemporary Portuguese-speaking Africa is set during the struggles for independence. Driven by the violence inherent to colonialism itself, the resort to armed struggle became an unavoidable historical necessity for the anticolonial nationalist enterprise. As Fanon lengthily demonstrates in “Concerning Violence”, anticolonial violence was deeply rooted in the dehumanizing Manichean logic of racism that constituted the main colonial weapon of conquest and subjugation, mediating the relation between colonized and colonizer. “Their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together – that is to say the material exploitation of the native by the settler – was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannon”, therefore the native who decides to stand up for the end of his/her exploitation “is ready for violence at all times. From birth it is clear for him that this narrow [colonial] world,

strewn with prohibitions, can only be called in question by absolute violence.” (Fanon *Wretched* 29). For that reason, the recourse to violence by anticolonial nationalistic movements in Africa after almost five centuries of colonialism is totally understandable, though not necessarily legitimate. Like action and reaction, colonizing and emancipating endeavors relied on the same “pushing” movement that we cannot simply assume to have stopped at the time independence was declared.

To acknowledge the overarching importance of violence as a structuring feature of post-independence societies encompassed by this study is in itself not a new initiative. The calamities caused by the civil wars that plagued Angola (1975-2002) and Mozambique (1977-1992) and the permanent state of civil unrest in the politically unstable Guinea-Bissau, are all too visible to allow anyone the optimistic belief that with political independence would, necessarily, come immediate peace. In the tripartite world order that followed World War II, no political system in the so-called Third World could hold without securing its choice of economic doctrine. However, the use of violence in these post-independence societies was not only circumscribed to local and bloody conflicts between capitalist and socialist superpowers that armed and financed the civil wars within these two countries. As the historian João Paulo Borges Coelho reminds us in relation to the violent post-independence orders in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique – the three ex-colonies in which the actual battles of the liberation struggles were fought –, among the determining circumstances for

these conflicts were the radical substitution of an extremely authoritarian colonial state by authoritarian independent states (2003 “Da violência anticolonial” 176). Borges Coelho’s enquiry, which traced the historical roots of the contemporary use of violence in Portuguese-speaking post-colonial Africa to the legacy of militarization present in these three societies during the period of anticolonial struggle, shows that the clue to understanding contemporary African societies may very well be in the observation of the post-colonial lingering of, rather than the ruptures with, colonial mentalities and practices. Here, we might find a way to renew our understanding of violence in the postcolony.

Authoritarianism: the legacy of people’s war

The chain of violence from colonial to anticolonial did not cease to influence the fate of Portuguese-Speaking African countries after their independence. As was largely debated in the 1980’s, the success of those newborn nation-states in creating societies that largely diverged from the colonial forms of exploitation from which they had just emerged derived from these countries’ nationalist armed struggles’ performances as the *people’s war*. Understood as “the form of a guerilla war in which the indigenous nationalist movement has sought to mobilise the largest possible section of the predominantly rural population to challenge and eventually eliminate foreign political and military control” (Chabal “People’s war” 110), *people’s war* was the actual means through which nationalist

movements confronted Portuguese colonialism in Africa. Contemplating the five Portuguese-speaking countries that fought on the three distinct fronts throughout the continent through their respective local nationalist movements, the people's war was seen by scholars such as John Saul (*The State and Revolution in Eastern Africa*) and Basil Davidson ("African peasants and revolution") as a gateway to a social, political and economic revolution unachieved by any African countries until then. Many believed that the experience of people's war was not only essential for defeating colonialism, but also a determinant of the construction of new socialist societies that these revolutionary movements sought to establish after their respective countries' independence. As Chabal says, it was thought that "[p]eople's war would succeed, where constitutional decolonization had failed, in bringing revolution to Africa and thus in laying the foundations for a non neo-colonial path to development: a transition to socialism" (105).

Although it is not as constructive as was predicted by those sympathetic to the idea of successful socialism in Africa, the relation between people's war and socialist experimentation can be verified across the five Portuguese-speaking countries. If we divide them into two groups, separating the aforementioned three continental countries in which people's war actually took place from the two in which such mobilization did not happen – the archipelago-states of Cape Verde and São Tomé e Príncipe –, we can see the different ways in which the advent of war marked the role of violence in each society.

Much in line with the plans drawn by Amílcar Cabral (“Resistência armada”), it was thought that the mobilization involved in a people’s war of independence would prepare these countries for the installation of socialism because it would disrupt the colonial practices and institutions allowing the newly independent states to start anew. This type of war requires, at its core, an ideologically grounded vanguard party to achieve political mobilization in urban and rural areas so as to secure the continuous supply of human and material resources. As a result of that, new national ideologies would be formed through the alliance of the revolutionary elites and the rural masses. New material conditions would also be developed, though mostly in the liberated zones. War would push for the development of more advanced and effective local agricultural production, breaking the (ultra-)colonial Portuguese cycle of production based on large-scale agricultural export production through forced labor, considered by some the most backward in colonial Africa (Anderson “Portugal and the end of ultra-colonialism” 97-100).

Reality, though, was less optimistic than the expectations of those who viewed the combination of national liberation and socialist revolution favorably. Already in 1983, Patrick Chabal noted that despite the success of the people’s war in securing independence, the “nationalists were not in any position to mobilise the population on the basis of economic and social grievances which have been paramount in most twentieth-century revolutions” (“People’s war” 121). The lack of revolutionary preconditions,

he argues, impeded the alliance between the revolutionary bourgeoisie and the peasantry from going beyond a joint opposition to the ex-colonizer, towards a new society directed at modernization of modes of production and industrialization. The ex-colonies' state of extreme economic and social underdevelopment in which they were kept by Portugal meant that agricultural production had never reached self-sufficient levels. Besides that, the various forced labor methods in place failed to engage the peasants in the advantages of large-scale productive processes. As soon as the authoritarian figure of the colonizer disappeared, the peasantry felt free to return to more traditional modes of production, which were clearly at odds with the modernization process. The economic situation was also aggravated by the destruction caused by the liberation war and by the mass-departure of the already scarce qualified labor workforce – composed mainly of the Portuguese. In this conjuncture, the large-scale production necessary to the planning of the economy, at the heart of Marxist-Leninist oriented socialism as a mode of production, was virtually impossible.

Regardless of these setbacks preventing the people's war from fulfilling its role in paving the way for a complete revolution, socialism was still the socio-economic system adopted by each of the five Portuguese-speaking countries in the first fifteen years after the end of the liberation struggle. As important as it was, the lack of infrastructure by itself did not account for the unfeasibility of the construction of prosperous socialist societies in these countries. The failure in promoting political mobilization

through ideology can be seen as one of the main reasons why peasants did not seem willing to embrace the changes necessary for revolutionary practice. As Chabal observes, “[i]n most instances, anti-colonial sentiments in the village amounted to a desire for a return to ‘traditional’ socio-political institutions rather than for integration into a modern socialist party organization” (119).

The experience of people’s war, nonetheless, fundamentally influenced the way in which the nationalistic movements, converted after independence into revolutionary state-parties, organized the new socialist states. The causal relation between political ideology *and* violence, that was key for the mobilization against colonial troops during the liberation war, was transformed into political ideology *through* violence. Once “ideological orientation determined the main political, social and economic policies adopted . . . by the Lusophone African regimes” (Chabal et al *A History* 65-66), ideology needed to be enforced.

Ideological orthodoxy, thus, shaped much of the structural violence in the social fabric of socialist Angola and Mozambique. While these societies did unite – to diverse extents – to expel the colonizer, the consolidation of the socialist revolution was still endangered by each country’s civil war – largely financed by international interests due to the potential impact of the eventual success of African socialism during the Cold War and Apartheid in neighboring South Africa. The continued state of war in each of these countries greatly favored the enforcement of

authoritarianism through the widespread use of violence by the single-party state. In Angola, the failed attempt at a coup by the MPLA dissidents under the alleged command of Nito Alves, in 1977, led to the hardening of the regime through its use of constant political persecution. Allied to the state of emergency inherent in times of war, MPLA's Stalinist-style administration made room for corruption, economic deterioration and massive impoverishment of the population (Chabal, "The limits of nationhood" 117). While projects in the agricultural realm were impracticable due to the impact of years of war – both prior and subsequent to independence – the exploitation of the country's many mineral resources such as oil and diamonds through state-run companies was not enough to sustain the population, the war and the pockets of corrupt government officials. "Socialism in Angola, for all the idealism which genuinely moved a large proportion of the party militants at independence, turned out in the end to have been the eminently practical instrument for an intense neo-patrimonial and economically unproductive authoritarianism" (Chabal et al *A History* 66).

Authoritarianism during Frelimo's rule was less iron-fisted than in Angola. Since the country's mineral wealth was not considered valuable, agriculture through communal farms constituted one of the main economic attempts of the single-party state to both integrate and economically develop the country. Different from what took place in Angola, the hardening of the Mozambican regime happened as the forced villagization of the country

came with the need to transform traditionally-minded peasants into the “New Man/New Woman”, a process that gave way to the creation of reeducation camps (Cabaço 410-417). Whilst the mood that prevailed in Angola was one of political witch-hunting, the Mozambican regime directed its repressive force against traditional forms of social organization, labeling them as “obscurantism” and enforcing ideological modernization. Notwithstanding the appearance of an actual “witch/wizard-hunt”, Frelimo’s eagerness to dismantle customary or traditional organizations was very political, as the system of traditional authority had been coopted by the Portuguese colonial administration as a way to control territories it could not penetrate.

Meanwhile, Guinea-Bissau did not really face a long lasting civil war after independence, but the political fragmentation to which it fell victim – as foreshadowed by the assassination of Amílcar Cabral in 1973 by members of his own party – assured the continuation of violence throughout its socialist years and beyond. The state-authoritarianism instituted by paranoid presidents was grounded in a *de facto* political fragmentation, verifiable on the persistence of ethnic-oriented precolonial and colonial forms of local organization in the rural areas. The regimes’ attempt to maintain their positions through “factionalisation and personalification of political power” (Chabal et al *A History* 262) only increased the levels of political instability that crippled the country. Although promising, Guinea-Bissau’s experience of people’s war and political organization – PAIGC

managed to hold elections to establish independent regional councils even before independence – did not lead to a transformed post-independence society. Collecting a history of coups, political instability, a civil war (1998-1999), and economic underdevelopment, what the country's post-independence history has inherited from the nationalist cause seems to be limited to the struggle.

Violence after revolutionary ideology

The situation of Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe was, as one can expect, quite different from the aforementioned three continental African countries. Given that these two countries did not undergo the experience of people's war, ideological orthodoxy did not take place as forcefully. Nevertheless, for reasons which also relate to each country's political constitution, violence is still part of everyday life in these societies. If, as Thaler (2013) argues, strictly ideology-based violence tends to be more targeted and restrained – as shown by the cases of Frelimo and MPLA – in societies where ideology is not one of the main drivers of conflict, we find widespread, diffused and pervasive practices of violence, as can be seen in São Tomé and Príncipe and Cape Verde.

Much in line with Marx and Engels' conceptualization of ideology (*The German Ideology* 42) as a form of consciousness which, to be revolutionary, should be in tune with the material conditions of the societies within which it arises – or else it constitutes a false consciousness –,

Amílcar Cabral's statement that "[a] deficiência ideológica, para não dizer a falta total de ideologia, por parte dos movimentos de libertação nacional – que tem na sua justificação de base na ignorância da realidade histórica que esses movimentos pretendem transformar – constituem uma das maiores senão a maior fraqueza da nossa luta contra o imperialismo"⁵, ("A arma da teoria" 175-176) anticipated some of the main problems of post-independence São Tomé and Príncipe and Cape Verde. The lack of ideological cohesion of a party like the Santomean MLSTP not only inscribed divisiveness as its main characteristic, but also consolidated the country's political culture as one of protection of the private rather than of the public through the installation of clientelism, patronage and the institutionalization of personal loyalties. Constituted abroad by educated members of the elite in the diaspora who were barely known by the country's population from its foundation, in the 1960's, until after the Portuguese Carnation Revolution, in 1974 (Seibert "A política num micro-estado"; Nascimento "Poverty, of course we have it..."), the MLSTP bourgeois leadership lacked the revolutionary consciousness it could have acquired from a more direct involvement with the peasantry that never really happened⁶. This situation gave rise to a society that is deeply

⁵ "ideological deficiency, not to say the total lack of ideology, on the part of the national liberation movements – which is basically explained by the ignorance of historical reality that these movements aspire to transform – constitutes one of the greatest weaknesses, if not the greatest weakness, of our struggle against imperialism" (Wolfers 122).

⁶ Political agitation the country witnessed before independence was paved by the work of the components of the Pro-MLSTP Civic Association (*Cívica*), composed mainly by students from Lisbon who went back to São Tomé and Príncipe in order to spread ideas such as pan-Africanism, black power, Marxism and Maoism (Seibert 1995, 242). This

atomized in which the access to resources – usually public ones – is directly proportional to the caliber of personal connections. A generalized disbelief in the public commitment of those in government gave rise to a type of utilitarian violence that targets individuals who “passou a ser um crivo da afirmação de poder pessoal e grupal” ⁷ (Nascimento, “O crescendo da violência em São Tomé e Príncipe” 55).

Likewise, the “particularistic political culture” (Pina 8) of Cape Verde is an important aspect of the country’s complex social formation. It set off a similar process of social atomization which can greatly contribute to the spread of violence. While the undisturbed functioning of the country’s bipartisan political system, with power alternation, causes international observers to see Cape Verde as a “success story” (African Development Bank, African Development Fund “Cape Verde: A success story”), more detailed enquiry provides less optimistic pictures of the country’s internal situation. Understanding the establishment of a healthy democratic milieu in much more detail than is perceived by big international financial institutions, therefore going beyond the dichotomy of the presence versus absence of recognizably authoritarian political institutions, Leão Jesus de Pina’s “Cordialidade e democratização: da *morabeza* às tendências actuais

association, known for the radicalism of some of its components, was later dissolved for having opposed certain decisions of the MLSTP.

⁷ “became a sieve of affirmation of personal and group power”

da cultura política cabo-verdiana”⁸ offers a deeper analysis of the contemporary political climate in the country.

Departing from the acknowledgement of the importance of the principle of *morabeza* in Cape-Verdean society, Pina sets out to verify the extent to which this trait is verifiable in the current political culture of the country. Constituting one of the pillars of the country’s national identity, the creole word *morabeza* denotes a way of living that is inherently cordial, affable, sociable, receptive and, therefore, good for life in society as its drive for peaceful living would make Cape Verdeans more prone to democratic interests and less inclined to conflict and violence. Nonetheless, the study concludes that the general climate of distrust caused by the country’s atomized political culture points towards a general tendency of estrangement between citizens and the public arena, entailing a preference for the private sphere and withdrawal from a more active and solidary political role that goes against the *morabeza* principle.

The privileging of the private over the public, which was part of the archipelago’s way of life, is deeply associated with the country’s post-independence and post-revolutionary embrace of social-democracy instead of socialism (Chabal *A History* 71). It can be argued that the country’s economy based on remittances and foreign aid due to its harsh climatic conditions, lack of natural resources and infrastructure, has pushed it more quickly – in comparison with the other Portuguese ex-colonies – into a

⁸ “Cordiality and democratization: from *morabeza* to the current tendencies of Cape-Verdean political culture”

culture of capital and individualism without the material experience – and collective consciousness – raised by the performance of organized industrial labor. Such a culture of labor, which is pretty much at odds with the revolutionary ideals at the time of the struggle for independence, but in tune with the liberal ideals of the developed world – mainly the US and Western Europe, from which the majority of the remittances and international financial aid came – has led to an increase of youth violence in the country.

This leads researchers like Roque and Cardoso (2010) to question the apparent success story of countries like Cape Verde by showing how the rampant levels of youth involvement in crime – both as victims and perpetrators – are intrinsically connected with a “projecto ou modelo de paz liberal . . . através da insistência na despolitização e burocratização da política . . . e no esvaziamento das funções sociais do Estado”⁹ (5). The authors show that the level of youth marginalization is directly linked with the structural and symbolic violence to which young people are exposed. While the government works to protect the elite’s interests and investments, it abandons the marginalized youth that

convivem com todos os níveis de violência o que torna fácil a sua utilização, principalmente quando se encontram em situações adversas e o uso da violência surge como reacção. Ela aparece na família – violência doméstica, irresponsabilidade paternal e precariedade habitacional –, na

⁹ “project or model of liberal peace . . . through insistence in the depoliticization and bureaucratization of politics . . . and the emptying of the social functions of State”

rua contra grupos rivais e, ultimamente, contra a polícia

Não é estranho afirmar que a violência entra no processo de socialização¹⁰. (Lima 2010, 12)

It is in these grounds that violence has come to constitute one of the most important drives of the historical processes of Portuguese-speaking Africa. Employed as a tool for subjugation and as a weapon of freedom – serving to reinforce socialism and to sediment liberalism, or to generate and usurp power and wealth – violence has been the means to a vast array of ends and it is certainly an important part of these societies’ processes of socialization.

However, as it is important not to forget, the logic of “violence that generates violence” is not an exclusively Cape Verdean, African or even postcolonial endowment. If our treatment of violence is circumscribed by its representation in the literatures of Portuguese-speaking Africa, it is because this is the purview of our case study and it should not, in any hypothesis, imply that it is their exclusive malaise. What this chapter aims to show through the analysis of our corpus is how violence particularly constitutes a structural feature in the Portuguese-speaking African postcolony. As our digression into history shows – and as fiction records – violence is ingrained in the everyday life of post-independence. Violence is experienced and

¹⁰ “live with all levels of violence, making it easy to resort to, mainly when they find themselves in adverse situations, violence as a reaction. Violence is in the family – domestic violence, paternal irresponsibility and housing precariousness – on the streets against rival groups, and ultimately, against the police It is not strange to state that violence becomes part of the socialization process”

performed in a vast array of ways and, likewise, happens due to a variety of causes.

The following sections comprise three analytical subchapters that approach the major ways in which violence is portrayed in each of the five novels of our corpus: State violence, gender violence and memory violence. The comparative approach privileged in the next few sections seeks to highlight major commonalities and differences between the ways in which violence organizes the subject's relationship with the State, its organization in terms of gender and the way it permeates memory sediments. While the subsequent three analytical subsections will look at the significance of violence to each of the three aforementioned particular realms of life in society, the fourth and last section of this chapter will summarize and contrast the analytical findings in order to provide us with elements from which to draw a larger picture of the pervasiveness of violence in the fiction of contemporary literatures of Portuguese-speaking Africa.

3.1. State Violence

In the previous chapter dedicated to representations of the State in contemporary fictions of Portuguese-Speaking Africa, analysis has shown that the State is portrayed in terms of its context as time of becoming, in its construction as discourse actualization, in its hegemony as power, in its reach as performance and in its functioning as ideological apparatus. Nonetheless, as became evident in a number of passages analyzed, the main

form of interface between postcolonial State and citizen was constituted of scenes involving some type of violence. The overwhelming weight of this specific feature in our corpus made clear that it is too substantial to be treated only tangentially. Moreover, observation of the instances in which violence is staged in each of the novels in our corpus indicates that it is not only restricted to the State. As a result, the understanding of State violence laid out in the coming pages sees it as, simultaneously, within and beyond a practice of sovereignty which, combined with other modes of physical and symbolic coercion, characterize the fiction of postcolonial Portuguese-speaking Africa.

Nonetheless, before approaching State violence in a broader context, we should not take for granted the importance of the intrinsic relationship between these two forces. The strong tie connecting State and violence has become a given to the extent that the monopoly on violence itself constitutes one of the main components that defines the concept of State. In the field of sociology, Max Weber's definition of the State as a "human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory" (78) has set the pace for later conceptualizations of the term. Despite disagreeing with Weber's prominent positioning of violence in his definition of State, Anthony Giddens (1985) still recognizes its importance in defining the State. As he puts it, "[a] state can be defined as a political organization whose rule is territorially ordered and which is able to mobilize the means of violence to sustain that rule" (20). Even

Gianfranco Poggi, whose monographic volume on the State sees it as a “phenomenon principally and emphatically located within the sphere of political power”, cannot avoid mentioning the State’s intricate relation with violence, addressing it early in his opening chapter as “the role of coercion” (4).

Likewise, our corpus too shows the vital role that violence has in representations of the State throughout Portuguese-speaking Africa. In a paradigmatic example of this intimate relationship, *Campo de Trânsito*’s mapping of an image of the State onto the material site of the internment camp suggests that these two spheres of society are inherently interlinked. It is a narrative consubstantiation between State and coercion that echoes a classic Marxist view of the State *conceived as* repressive apparatus (Althusser 137). Seen this way, *Campo*’s close look at the camp’s microphysics of violence constitutes a language through which one can read the State.

By choosing the camp as the setting for his narrative, João Paulo Borges Coelho evokes a State that is, necessarily, a state of exception and, therefore, a site of violence *par excellence*. As Giorgio Agamben puts it, “[t]he camp is the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule. In the camp, the state of exception, which was essentially a temporary suspension of the rule of law on the basis of a factual state of danger, is now given a permanent spatial arrangement, which as such nevertheless remains outside the normal order” (168-169, emphasis in the

original). In the enclosed space of the camp, the life of its unfortunate inhabitants can be stripped of any political status and reduced to *bare life*. The camp, therefore, is juridical and materially designed as the “most absolute biopolitical space ever to have been realized, in which power confronts nothing but pure life, without any mediation” (171). It is the anatomy of this place and its functioning that constitutes the core of *Campo de Trânsito*, a repressive machine designed to discipline and punish.

Campo de Trânsito’s detailed fictionalization of the *modus operandi* of the camp bears similarities with Foucault’s elaborations in the field, whose work, according to Agamben, is characterized by “its decisive abandonment of the traditional approach to the problem of power, which is based on juridico-institutional models (the definition of sovereignty, the theory of the State), in favor of a unprejudiced analysis of the concrete ways in which power penetrates subjects’ very bodies and forms of life” (5). In so doing, one notices that Borges Coelho’s novel does not focus on the state of exception that gives way to the existence of the camp, which is portrayed as a given. What the novel underlines is that power institutions, such as the State, have to *simultaneously* subjugate body and mind. By so doing, the narrative strips away some of the hidden structures behind organic-looking, yet deeply coercive, initiatives for social management available to and at the disposal of any State. The passage below, portraying Mungau’s moment of arrest, is an example of the narrative’s emphasis on the concreteness of the State’s coercive power, rather than on its juridico-institutional aspect:

“J. Mungau?”

“Sim, sou eu”, responde.

“Estás detido!”

. . .

“Por ordem de quem?”

“Vá, vai vestir-te se não queres acompanhar-nos nesse estado”, diz o que falou, que parece ser quem ali manda. Fá-lo numa voz monocórdica, tão sem sobressaltos quanto a avenida lá fora.

É maciço, um tudo-nada gordo até, pescoço taurino, cabeça rapada. Bexigoso. Mas o que verdadeiramente impressiona nele são os olhos. Não têm cor, quase brancos, incluindo as pupilas. Nunca viu umas pupilas assim. Duvida até que ele possa ver alguma coisa com aquilo. Levanta os braços para argumentar mas aquelas pupilas brancas travam-lhe o gesto a meio. Baixa-os, suspira resignado e vira-lhe as costas, voltando ao quarto.¹¹ (Borges Coelho *Campo* 10-11)

The lack of elaboration of the juridical grounds on which Mungau’s arrest is made is in itself a trace of the state of exception, which is skillfully translated into narrative tension. In its first direct address, the apparatus

¹¹“J. Mungau?”/ “Yes, that’s me”, he answers / “You’re under arrest!?” / “By whose orders?” / “Come on, go and get dressed if you don’t want to come like this”, said the one who seems to be in charge. He speaks monotonously, so quiet as the street outside. / He’s massive, a little fat even, bull-like neck, shaved head. He’s pockmarked. But what truly gets one attention are hi eyes. Colorless, almost white, including the pupils. He even doubts the guys sees anything with that. He raises his arms to argue but those pupils stop him. He lowers his arms resigned and turn his back, going back to the room.

marks its hierarchical position by addressing Mungau as *tu*, the second-person singular subjective pronoun (implicit in the conjugation of the verb to be, *estás*) which, in European and Mozambican Portuguese, has a disrespectful connotation when used among equal adults, since its use involves either a very familiar or friendly setting or used as an address to a child by an older adult, marking an implied “due respect” earned by age difference. Equally, the ease with which the representative of the police dismisses Mungau’s enquiry implies a situation of entitlement that is clearly founded – although not expressed – on the reduction of Mungau’s own political rights. Power is represented not in terms of legal entitlement, but by the concrete physical characteristics of its representative. Its weight is materialized in the massive bull-like body of Mungau’s interlocutor. Disfigured by pockmarks – in Portuguese *Bexigoso* – and possessing colorless eyes, the embodiment of this apparatus is characterized by its bulkiness, its sickness and its ill-looking sight. All this is enough to keep Mungau from trying to defend himself.

In the same way that power is inscribed on the body and in the language of the representative of the repressive apparatus, powerlessness is expressed in the bodies and minds of those it suppresses. In this sense, the analysis of Borges Coelho’s fine architecture of coercive power can identify a number of structures noted by Foucault in his study of the mechanisms underlying Western penal systems, *Discipline and Punish*. In the section of his study dedicated to the scrutiny of the disciplinary tools integrated in the

penal systems, Foucault highlights that, in order to discipline, the system of power that is in charge has to produce “Docile Bodies” (135-169) to be distributed and controlled. The distribution of bodies in enclosed spaces, he argues, is necessary to further divide people and destroy any sense of community, which is contrary to the will of those in power. Added to this process of atomization is the control of the activities of the subject through time-tabling, imposition of activities aimed at the integration of the body with its designated objects of work and exhaustion through which the completely alienated barely-living subject can be put together with other equally tamed subjects and articulated as a collective mass of workers.

The next structure analyzed by Foucault is “The Means of Correct Training” (140-194) in which he details how hierarchical observation – that is, surveillance, allied to normalizing judgment, as the process of inculcating an idea of normality that makes it easy to detect and to neutralize through shame any display of individual difference – and examination work together to train and dispose of the docile body. These structures detected by Foucault’s historical research are the pillars on which the three-camp complex of *Campo de Trânsito* is built. As its name suggests, the Transit Camp is the first stop of those admitted into the camp complex – “Este é um campo de Trânsito, o que significa que cedo ou tarde quem cá está acabará por ser transferido”¹² (Borges Coelho *Campo* 83). There, inmates are made

¹² “This is a Transit camp, which means that sooner or later whoever is here will end up being transferred”.

familiar with enclosure – their incarceration –, division – separated into individual sleeping cubicles, from which they get their names – and time-tabling – marked by firmly set meal times. However, while these measures are more directly enforced onto the inmates' bodies, their articulation, exhaustion of use and composition of force are not compulsory in that camp.

As we see later in the novel, the enforcement of activities more directly connected to productive labor takes place both in the Old and in the New Camp, where docile bodies are actively exploited – a process which will be detailed in the next chapter of this study. Still, despite the split of the mechanisms of body coercion among the complex of camps, the Foucauldian training devices, or the more intellectual part of the reprogramming projects of disciplinary institutions, are present in different ways across the whole of the prison complex. Hierarchical observation is duly performed by the administrative structure in place. At the top of the pyramid, the Director is the representative of the State commanding the police and the army, embodied by Bexigoso and his soldiers, as well as being superior to the Teacher of the Transit Camp and the Village Chief who is in charge both of the Old and the New Camp. Additional to this visible set of observers, the Director also has a set of informants in place such as the Tea Seller, who intoxicates inmates with hallucinogenic tea to extract information, and Mungau himself whose precious ability to read and write makes him valuable to the established informal surveillance system. Mungau's cooptation into the organization of the camp configures a rich

example of what Foucault called the “normalizing judgment” technique. Achieved through the installation of a gratification-punishment structure designed to inculcate the camp’s standards of appropriate behavior in the inmates, normalization prepares for examination, the very role given to Mungau as he is asked to produce a secret written report of the state of affairs in the Old and the New Camp for the Director’s evaluation of the administrative performance of the Chief of the Village.

Thus, as becomes evident through the observation of *Campo de Trânsito*, its approach to State violence denounces it as structural and concrete, physical and psychological, and as material and ideological. In this sense, the final scene of the narrative is emblematic. After the death of the Director and the threat of the Transit Camp’s invasion by mutineer prisoners from both the Old and the New Camp, the continuation of Mungau as a prisoner not only points towards a continuation of the State. It also points to the continuation of the State *specifically through* the survival of its coercive apparatus.

“Prepara-te”, diz [Bexigoso], com a voz entaramelada.

“Está tudo pronto, vamos partir.”

“Vamos partir pra onde?”, pergunta Mungau.

“Não te esqueças do teu estatuto de prisioneiro. Não te cabe fazer perguntas!”, diz severamente o Bexigoso, antes de soltar uma gargalhada¹³. (Borges Coelho *Campo* 208).

Emulating the opening scene of the novel, its final moments, which are also centered on a power-marked dialogue between Bexigoso and Mungau, reassert the effectiveness of the prisoner’s reprogramming. Achieved through the docilization of his body and the training of his mind, the success in disciplining Mungau is such that, once again, he does not attempt to escape his captor even when nobody is watching him. Moreover, due to his transformation, this time, he is the one helping Bexigoso on their hurried departure before the confrontation of the prisoners in revolt with the army forces sent to neutralize them – “ ‘Vá, ajuda-me a transportar este saco de evidências para o camião!’ ”¹⁴(208). Mungau does this despite the fact that it might be self-harming, since the evidence collected might be used to incriminate him for the death of the Director. Notwithstanding this instance of conditioning, the next and last act of the protagonist in the novel consists of a gesture that echoes the Director’s distribution of small favors, so characteristic of the normalization process of which Mungau himself had been a victim. Just as the Director, who used to give spoons – not provided to the inmates who had the right only to a plate in the camp – to those from whom he wanted small favours, Mungau “atira furtivamente as colheres que

¹³ “Get ready”, says [Bexigoso], hesitant. “It is all set, we are leaving”/ “Where are we going?” Asks Mungau / “Don’t you forget your situation of prisoner. You are in no position to ask questions!”, Bexigoso says severely, before laughing out loud.

¹⁴ “Come on, help me take this bag of evidences to the truck!”

tem no bolso para os desacordados prisioneiros, como se a semeasse. Para se ver livre delas e para que eles possam enfrentar as papas do futuro – se as houver – de colher na mão”¹⁵ (209). At the end of the novel, the apex of the protagonist’s journey of learning consists of a gesture that evidences his conscious adoption of the State ideology.

As he adopts the practices of the coercive system that disciplined him, Mungau’s last gesture illustrates the intimate relation between the coercive State apparatus and State ideology, in which the role of the first is to concretely inculcate the ideology of the latter into the subject’s mind by the manipulation of his/her body and the framing of his/her will. In this sense, it can be argued that the narrative’s detailed picture of Mungau’s trajectory in *Campo de Trânsito* brings forward precisely this constitutive relation between the physical and the political through which power can be assured by its representation in the form of ideology. Defined in Althusserian terms as “an imaginary relation to real relations” (167), ideology is seen as an abstraction of the power relations in place – based on the primacy of exploitation of a large number of men by a small number of men – that is made into the code of conduct of a certain society through the use of violence as device. Therefore, according to Althusser, ideology has both an imaginary aspect that determines how ideologies are described in the form of codes, rules and doctrines and a material form that is deeply

¹⁵ “he furtively throws the spoons in his pocket to the colorless prisoners, as if sowing them. To get rid of them and to enable the prisoners to face future porridge – in case there is any – armed with spoons”.

enmeshed through its conscious performance by subjects. Where a subject “is concerned, the existence of the ideas of his belief is material in that *his ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject*” (169; emphasis in the original). Thus, ideology can only exist in the dialectics between form and content – or material and abstract – which in the case of the State, is set in motion by the force of violence, which is represented in *Campo de Trânsito* in an extreme form by the functioning of its coercive apparatus in the circumscribed and utterly meaningful space of the camp.

Campo de Trânsito’s approach to violence follows a narrative structure that goes from the performance of violence to the idea or ideology of State. It establishes a relationship of complementarity with *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*, whose historical background suggests the opposite direction as it seems to depart from State ideology to the pervasion and performance of violence. Locked within the small space of the camp, the angle privileged by *Campo* describes the inner functioning of structured violent ideological disciplining that highlights its systemic nature as suggested by the inevitability of its continuation, regardless of any sporadic uprisings it might encounter. *Teoria*, in its turn, offers a wider and greatly fragmented picture in space, time and point of view of a trajectory of violence. This trajectory comes from conscious State-oriented ideological practices that, in its turn, come from, as was stated in the previous chapter, a

performance of violence that bears its own seeds for change. Following the moves of Angolan history, in Agualusa's novel the relationship between violence and State ideology is the departure point.

Benjamim afundou o rosto nos joelhos, sem conseguir controlar o choro. Jeremias empurrou-o com o ombro, incomodado:

Acalma-te. És um soldado português.

Monte interveio:

Deixe o miúdo tranquilo. Não o deviam ter trazido. Quanto ao senhor, não passa de um prostituto a soldo do imperialismo americano. Devia ter vergonha.

E os cubanos, esses não são mercenários?

Os companheiros cubanos não vieram até Angola por dinheiro. Vieram por convicções.

Eu fiquei em Angola por convicções. Combato pela civilização ocidental, contra o imperialismo soviético. Combato pela sobrevivência de Portugal.

Tretas. Eu não acredito nisso. Você não acredita nisso, a sua mãe não acredita nisso.

...

Monte desamarrou os dois mercenários. Endireitou-se:

Capitão Jeremias Carrasco. Suponho que Carrasco seja alcunha. O senhor é culpado de atrocidades sem fim.

Torturou e assassinou dezenas de nacionalistas angolanos. Alguns camaradas nossos gostariam de o ver num tribunal. Eu acho que não devemos perder tempo com julgamentos. O povo já o condenou.

...

Monte regressou ao carro. Os soldados empurraram os portugueses até ao muro. Afastaram-se alguns metros. Um deles tirou uma pistola da cintura e, num gesto quase distraído, quase de enfado, apontou-a, e disparou três vezes. Jeremias Carrasco ficou estendido de costas. Viu aves a voarem no céu alto. Reparou numa inscrição, a tinta vermelha, no muro manchado de sangue, picado de balas:

*O luto continua.*¹⁶ (Aqualusa 32-34).

The long quote is necessary as it vividly illustrates the ideological colors of State violence in *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*. Although it is not

¹⁶ Benjamin dropped his head between his knees, unable to hold back the tears. Jeremias was annoyed, and nudged him with his shoulder: / 'Take it easy. You're a Portuguese soldier.' / Monte butted in: / 'Leave the kid alone. You shouldn't have brought him to our country. As for you, sir, you are no more than a whore in the pay of American imperialism. You ought to be ashamed.' / 'And what about the Cubans? Aren't they mercenaries, too?' / 'Our Cuban companions didn't come to Angola for the money. They came because of their convictions.' / 'And I stayed in Angola because of my convictions. I'm fighting for Western civilisation, against Soviet imperialism. I'm fighting for Portugal's survival.' / 'Bullshit. I don't believe that. You don't believe that, even your mother wouldn't believe that.' / He straightened up / 'Captain Jeremias Carrasco ... Carrasco, as in "executioner"? Well, I'm assuming that's got to be a nickname ... You are guilty of countless atrocities. You tortured and murdered dozens of Angolan nationalists. Some of our comrades would like to see you in a courtroom. But I don't think we ought to be wasting our time with trials. The people have found you guilty already.' / ... / Monte walked over to the car. The soldiers pushed the Portuguese men up against the wall. They took a few steps back. One of them pulled a pistol from his belt, and in a movement that was almost absent-minded, almost annoyed, he pointed it and fired three times. Jeremias Carrasco was lying on his back. He saw the birds flying high in the sky. He noticed an inscription in red ink on the bloodstained, bullet-pocked wall: / The struggle continues. (Hahn 25-27)

the only kind of violence experienced in the novel, as we will see in the course of this chapter, an ideologically-laden State violence seems to be the core from which a culture of violence spreads through all the layers of Angolan society. The scene portrays the encounter between the Angolan Monte and his nationalist soldiers and the Portuguese Jeremias Carrasco and his fellow de-mobilized colleague, Benjamin, who decided to stay in the country despite Portugal's withdrawal of its troops. The encounter happens by chance. Regardless of the official end of hostilities between both parties, the direct confrontation between these enemies is unavoidable. At the dawn of an independent Angola, Monte is the closest to a repressive State apparatus that there is – a role that will become clearer later in the novel. As such, his very first description highlights the security and power of his voice. His position of power is reinforced by the attention drawn to his benevolent politeness at which the Portuguese ex-captain, often called a mercenary given that he is no longer commissioned by the country that mobilized him, laughs in a gesture of defiance. Regardless of their differences, Monte and Jeremias can still establish a relationship of mutual recognition of their status or positions, evidenced by their use of the second-person personal pronoun *você* (you) and *senhor* (sir) to address each other, signaling respect. The same does not happen with their address to Benjamin, treated as *tu*, given his youth and implied low status. As the scene proceeds, the mirror effect between Monte and Jeremias becomes more evident, as they both fight for diametrically, and therefore interconnected, opposing

causes. The almost distracted and bored way in which Jeremias and Benjamin's execution is performed indicates the banality of violence that is in place in the country's evident state of exception that empowers Monte as captor, jury, judge and executor of the law in the name of the people. A State whose dark *devenir* is predicted by the inscription on the bullet-perforated and blood-stained execution wall in which one reads the punning rendering of the famous catch-phrase "*A luta continua!*" (The fight goes on!), as "*O luto continua.*" (The grief goes on).

The Angola of *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento* is one in which the state of grief (*luto*) that is concomitant with the struggle for independence passes on to the independent society, as death continues to be the main currency for power in an unstable country that has been long shaken by a lasting civil war (*luta*). In such a conjuncture, even when the country has never declared the state of war, siege or emergency that conditions the eventual suspension of citizen rights as secured by all three versions of the country constitution to date, the novel portrays a *de facto* state of exception that seems deeply connected with the political tensions that are put forward by the civil war. However, the novel does not concentrate on the violence directly generated by the conflict between the State and the rebels (MPLA vs. UNITA). It dwells on a yet more intimate level of the conflict: the fractionalization within the State-party itself, which leads to the liminal

position of ideological paranoia materialized by a situation in which “os angolanos se matassem uns aos outros como cães raivosos” ¹⁷(71).

As a consequence, the State violence that wrapped the country in the years of fear that followed independence is portrayed as “slippages of reason”, since the narrative purposefully blurs the difference between colonial and independent-State coercion. The mirroring of Monte and Jeremias that frames the way both characters are introduced in the plot is reiterated later on, when we get to know that what attracted Monte’s wife to him were precisely the traces he had in common with her father, a fanatic Portuguese (born in Angola) who was an eager supporter of the colonial enterprise and against revolutionary nationalism – they both had the same eyes (214). The novel also indicates that the relationship between Monte and Horácio is similarly based on an interesting level of mutual respect. If Monte has silently avoided his father-in-law’s being arrested many times, his father-in-law was the one crying the loudest during Monte’s funeral (215). Moreover, the description of Horácio’s routine after the death of Monte further reinforces the connection between old-time ideological enemies as he spends his afternoons in a bar discussing politics and ideology with old men like himself (216).

The necessary connection this novel makes between State violence and a certain generation of subjects shows State violence as mainly

¹⁷ “not for Angolans to kill one another like rabid dogs.” (Hahn 70)

ideologically-oriented, and hence historically situated and progressive. It substantially differs from the circularity and inescapability that are found in *Campo de Trânsito. Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*'s focus on ideology as a pivotal element for the development of State violence is, at the same time, critical and hopeful. It is critical to the extent that it approaches ideology – both colonial and Marxist-Leninist – as a false consciousness interpellating subjects to consciously accept it and practice it, thus making it concretely real (Althusser 182). Nevertheless, Agualusa's approach is hopeful insofar as it projects Monte as a State agent capable of exercising subjectivity in its twofold sense of submissive being and autonomous entity.

The connection between ideology and violence with subjective will is visible in the way the novel repetitively underlines Monte's adhesion to a Marxist view of society, which demands his support of the revolutionary State and that he act violently. The quoted passage in which Jeremias is executed shows Monte's unshakable commitment to the revolutionary cause. The next mention of him clarifies how torture-induced interrogations carried out by the agent were "excesses" necessary to preserve the socialist revolution (Agualusa 65). Later on, we discover that Monte's reason for leaving his job as a "public servant" is the realization, as he clandestinely buries an innocent man assassinated by the regime as the result of a foolish mistake, of how the State had betrayed the ideals it vouched for three decades earlier, "Tantos anos decorridos, e ali estava, a cantarolar o *Funeral de um Lavrador*, enquanto sepultava, em terra incógnita, um escritor sem

sorte”¹⁸ (156). Monte’s performative awakening regarding the State abandonment of the socialist ethos leads him to leave its coercive apparatus. The State has become a “‘machine’ of repression, which enables the ruling classes [...]to ensure their domination over the working class, thus enabling the former to subject the latter to the process of surplus-value extortion (i.e. to capitalist exploitation)” (Althusser 137).

Campo de Trânsito and *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento* constitute fictional renditions that reaffirm the centrality of violence to State ideology both systemically and historically. Despite not being foregrounded to the same extent as it is in the Angolan and Mozambican novels analyzed, violence is also seen as constitutive of State in *Tiara*, *Aurélia de Vento* and *Marginais*. Similar to *Teoria*, *Tiara* is a novel in which we see revolutionary violence become a weapon of internal oppression to guarantee political power to an ex-revolutionary bourgeoisie who are eager to build socialism without democracy. In such a context, the novel gives more prominence to the pervasion of violence in the culture of independent societies that has

¹⁸ “So many years had gone by, and there he was, humming ‘The Labourer’s Funeral’ while he buried, in an unmarked grave, a writer who hadn’t had luck on his side” (Hahn 160). *Funeral de um Lavrador* is a song by the Brazilian writer, songwriter and singer Chico Buarque de Hollanda. The song is part of the singer’s album that turned the poem *Morte e Vida Severina* by the Brazilian poet João Cabral de Melo Neto (partially translated by Elizabeth Bishop into English as “The Death and Life of a Severino”) into music. This song brings a part of the poem in which the migrant peasant, on his journey from the arid backlands to the city, witnesses the burial of another peasant worker. In Agualusa’s novel, Monte sings the following verses: “Esta cova em que estás/ com palmos medida/ é a conta menor que tiraste em vida/ é de bom tamanho/ nem largo nem fundo/ é a parte que te cabe deste latifúndio. ... É uma cova grande/ para teu corpo defunto/ mas estarás mais ancho/ que estavas no mundo” (Agualusa 156) which loosely translates as “This grave where you are/ measured in feet/ is the smallest payment which you’ve received/its size is good/ width and depth are premium/ it is the share you’re entitled to in this latifundium. ... It is a big grave/ to your body defunct/ but you’ll have more comfort/ that you could ever afford”.

successfully engaged in the struggle for independence. Its feminine perspective portrays the various forms of gender oppression in place, whereas cultural clash comes to the fore as the negotiation of postcolonial difference, which becomes key to the construction of the independent societies.

Tiara's writing of violence registers a moment of transition from ideologically-oriented organized war to a postcoloniality of political abuse by the State in the name of ideology. As the narrative advances, the violence represented gradually moves from the physical type to give way to cultural, abstract and diffused modes of violence which, as the novel shows, are essential for the assurance of political power in times of peace. Consequently, violence is no longer portrayed as a weapon used exclusively by the belligerent sides of a declared armed conflict. In this sense, *Tiara* records the State laying down its firearms, but instead, starting violate the country's citizens with the weapon of bureaucracy that victimizes the protagonist of the novel. The single-party State of *Tiara* starts its sovereign history by making political use of the administrative apparatus "by emphasising ideological as against managerial criteria of action" (Poggy 163). It is a premise which costs *Tiara's* own employment in the novel. This transition from physical to political and administrative violence by the State is complete in the fictional São Tomé and Príncipe of *Aurélia de Vento*.

Set at a posterior postcolonial moment in relation to what we find in *Tiara*, *Aurélia de Vento* depicts a State after struggle which, in this countryl

was fought in the political rather than in the armed arena. As we have seen in our previous chapter, the fervor of nationalist militancy in the novel is just a memory circumscribed to the critical remembrances of the deceased San Labeca. As a consequence, State violence in this novel happens through political abuse as Minister Domingos Ventura tries to appropriate the legally owned land of the protagonist's father. While also giving way to the portrayal of other forms of violence, *Aurélia* still widely emphasizes a State whose apparatus seems to be passing through a further historical transition. Its relationship with the law clearly indicates the transformation of a single-party State into a liberal-democratic one in which the governmental attempt to abuse the law is stopped by a judiciary system committed to justice and legality. Gianfranco Poggio states that: "when contrasted with liberal-democratic systems, laws in Soviet-type party-states allow much greater discretion to state agents, or more freely refer to non-legal considerations"(161). Seen through this perspective, the State in *Aurélia de Vento* is one which is transitioning away from an ideology-laden single-party system into the liberal-democratic mode that has thrived in market economies around the world. The best example among the novels of our corpus comes from Cape Verde.

Interestingly enough, *Marginais'* stake on the State seems to establish a historical continuum with the two narratives previously discussed. The protagonist, Sérgio Pitboy, is born after independence and lives his troubled adolescence in the 1990's, a time during which Cape

Verde's postcoloniality has already surpassed its single-party state socialist phase and is plunged into a market economy under the flag of a multiparty democracy strongly reliant on the predatory tourist industry. In tune with the liberal turn, the State Sérgio describes in his memoir is an absent one. As he puts it:

A pior violência é não se importar com os outros, com aqueles que vivem em condições sub-humanas. A indiferença dói mais que um murro no estômago e neste sentido as autoridades da ilha emergem como os mais violentos. A minha vida tem sido um circo romano, abandonado na arena de atrocidades, de roubos, de tráfico, da violência num salve-se quem puder.¹⁹ (Rocha 159)

Negligence is the most systemic and effective way through which the State, via the authorities of the island, violates its citizens. In addition to the frequent rapes, beatings and other coercive activities by the police, neglect seems to be the most effective and widely deployed way through which the State violates the island's inhabitants. Basic rights such as housing, healthcare, drinking water and sewage are denied to those condemned to live on the margins of society.

¹⁹ The worst violence is not to care about others, about those who live under subhuman conditions. Indifference hurts more than a punch in the stomach and in this sense the authorities of the island emerge as the most violent. My life has been a Roman circus, abandoned in the arena of atrocities, robberies, trafficking, of violence in a state of every man for himself.

The state of indigence in which Sérgio and his neighbors are found reflect a de facto lack of civil rights that turns them into easy prey for private investors of the legal and illegal sectors of economy who are eager to maximize their profits through the exploitation of these people's semi-slave labor. Along with economic violence, the marginalization of the poor portrayed in *Marginais* gives way, as we will see through the next sections of this chapter, to many other forms of violence that derive from the single fact of State indifference.

When compared to each other, the five novels analyzed furnish the reader with a prismatic, yet complementary, view of the State in postcolonial Portuguese-speaking Africa. *Campo de Trânsito's* allegorical narrative details the functioning of an integral relationship between State coercive apparatus and State ideology that is relevant, though to different extents, to each of the five countries in question at some point in their recent history. *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*, in its turn, builds on history to show the reader a State rendering of ideology into violence in the postcolonial *durée*. Agualusa's view of the relationship between State ideology and civilian coercion completes and supplements Borges Coelho's as it chooses to set it in a background of historical effects, in an open civil society for a longer time span instead of in universalizable microcosms of the camp. In contrast with the systemic views of the relations between state and violence offered by these two novels, the Guinean, Santomean and Cape Verdean narratives illustrate more specific cases. Nonetheless, as we have seen,

despite their diminished accent on State violence and their investment in the portrayal of the spread of violence throughout civil society, the three narratives still emphasize the importance of postcolonial State violence. As each narrative concentrates on a specific and successive period in the shared history of the five countries, they record the gradual abandonment and the combination of State infliction of violence onto the civilian body – as we see in the camps of *Campo* and in the tortures of *Teoria*. Their picture of State violence, therefore, includes the development of other non-physical forms of equally harmful civil coercion such as political coercion, abuse of law and the denial of elemental infrastructure and protection. In the remaining sections of this chapter, we will analyze the most prominent modes of violence found in our corpus which, aside from State violence, combine to haunt the contemporary fiction of Portuguese-speaking Africa.

3.2. *(En)Gender(ing) Violence*

As we have seen in the previous section, despite being present in each of the novels analyzed, State violence does not manifest itself equally everywhere. Likewise, as this section aims to demonstrate, it also does not affect every citizen in the same way. A detailed reading of section 3.1 shows that we have found a complete absence of women in the repressive state apparatuses represented in these narratives as found in *Campo de Trânsito* and *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*. Equally noticeable is women's subalternity before the State even when they are supposed to be the heroines

of their respective narratives, as can be noted in *Tiara* and *Aurélia de Vento*. Also, as we will see later in this section through the analysis of *Marginais*, exploitation and resistance too are experienced differently not only between women and men, but between diverse forms of gender identity. Despite being largely practiced by the State, gender violence is not circumscribed to it. Enmeshed in the social substrate of the cultures within which these novels are conceived, this type of violence is part of a much wider practice, which is why the analysis of the representation of gender violence requires an entire section dedicated to it.

Gender violence is a worldwide phenomenon from which none of the five countries included in this study is exempt. Seen largely through the scope of violence against women and girls “because it derives in part from women’s subordinate status in society” (Rose 4), contemporary views of gender violence, are not circumscribed to violence against those born with female genitalia. In line with Shelah S. Bloom our study understands gender violence as:

the general term used to capture violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender, along with the unequal power relationships between the two [or more] genders, within the context of a specific society. VAW/G [violence against women and girls] constitutes a part of GBV [gender-based violence]. Men and boys can also be victims of GBV. For example, homosexuality in many communities is considered an aberration

from the expectations of how men should behave. Men who have sex with men in these communities experience everything from discrimination in the health and legal sectors to physical attacks in the community because they are deviating from expectations around masculinity. Men may also experience GBV from their intimate partners, other family members as children, and peers. (14)

The fundamental aspect of gender, sexuality and gender violence for the comprehension of the challenge faced by contemporary postcolonies has been gaining visibility as postcolonial time develops and studies become more critical of the unfulfilled promises of freedom and equality in post-independence. Decades after the success of the wave of revolutionary nationalisms that freed the African continent from direct European colonialism, critics who are now very aware of the many ways in which colonialism was gendered, turn to postcolonial governments and revised nationalist projects asking the same questions once posed to colonial reason concerning gender, in order to know what has actually changed.

Despite the many advances brought about by revolutionary nationalisms in the field of gender equality across the continent, the work of a number of established scholars has been pointing, at least over the last three decades (Mosse; Connell; McClintock *Imperial Leather*; Yuval-Davies *Gender and Nation*), to the fact that gender and sexuality cannot be detached from Nation or State. According to R. W. Connell, a scholar widely known for his work on “hegemonic masculinities”, the State

management of gender derives from its legitimizing power over essential gendered aspects of civil life such as marriage, parental rights, pre and post-natal policies, and natality control, among many others. “It can hardly be denied that the state is deeply implicated in the social relations of gender”, she states (126). Nira Yuval-Davis, whose work on gender and nation is essential, reminds us of the inherently gendered character of the nation given its constitutive dependence on activities such “national reproduction, national culture and national citizenship as well as national conflicts and wars”(3), which are gendered per se. However, while the material weight of everyday life pragmatics’ makes the gendered nature of the nation-state unquestionable, leaving room for a series of debates in the field, the gendered nature of nationalism, especially of revolutionary nationalism, has only recently been challenged in the realm of postcolonial studies.

Anne McClintock closes the main body of her *Imperial Leather* with a chapter on nationalism, gender and race where she states that “[a]ll nationalisms are gendered, all are invented and all are dangerous -- dangerous not in Eric Hobsbawm's sense of having to be opposed, but in the sense that they represent relations to political power and to the technologies of violence” (352). Being a determinant tool for armed revolutionary nationalisms, violence, as we have seen, permeated the anticolonial and postcolonial structures that followed the colonial enterprise. With that in mind, it is impossible not to think that the gendering of nationalism was articulated without resorting to gender violence that was inscribed in the

postcolonial societies it helped to create. As McClintock proceeds with her argument concerning the obliviousness to gender of current theories on nationalism (Gellner; Anderson), and finding a sketch of gender agency only amidst the ambivalences of Fanon (she looks into his views of gender from “Algeria Unveiled”), we understand that an appreciation of the links between gender and nationalism is more likely to happen in the context of the former colonies than in the context of the former metropolis. While theoreticians of European nationalisms managed to ignore the differences of gender, those theorizing – geographically or epistemologically – from the colonies cannot afford to do so.

In this particular field of analysis, one can be sure that scholars concerned with the literatures of Portuguese-speaking Africa have been quite busy with matters of gender and sexuality that extrapolate on the representation of women alone. Many are the essays concerning gender in these literatures that can be found spread throughout the various edited volumes of literary critique over the last fifteen years. In terms of single-authored volumes, we can highlight Phillip Rothwell’s *A Postmodern Nationalist: Truth, Orality, and Gender in the Work of Mia Couto* (2004), Hillary Owen’s *Mother Africa, Father Marx: Women’s Writing of Mozambique 1948– 2002* (2007) and Ana Margarida Dias Martins’s *Magic Stones and Flying Snakes: Gender and the “Postcolonial Exotic” in the Work of Paulina Chiziane and Lídia Jorge* (2012). We also count at least four edited volumes to date dedicated to gender and sexuality encompassing

Portuguese-speaking Africa in the context of the Portuguese-speaking world, which are Susan Canty Quinlan and Fernando Arenas' *Lusosex: Gender and Sexuality in the Portuguese-Speaking World* (2002), Hilary Owen and Phillip Rothwell's *Sexual/Textual Empires: Gender and Marginality in Lusophone African Literature* (2004), Inocência Mata e Laura Padilha's *Mulher em África: Vozes de uma margem sempre presente* (2007) and Hilary Owen and Anna M. Klobucka's *Gender, Empire, and Postcolony: Luso-Afro-Brazilian Intersections* (2014). These numbers, which are expressive in relation to the quantity of active scholars dedicated to this particular stream in the field of comparative literature, can certainly be multiplied if expanded to include the growing number of doctoral thesis and master dissertations in course or approved in the various universities across the globe.

Although different in their particular enquiries, these studies seem to univocally state the inescapable relevance of the comprehension of any given gender struggle in the field in the *long durée* of pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial gender and sexual oppression. By examining the continuations, rather than endorsing presumed ruptures with practices of gender violence throughout different times of a society's history, a gender-oriented critique of African literatures written in Portuguese interrupts the process of acritical reification of nationalism that proliferates in the field, predominantly among studies that focus on the close relationship between literature and national identity. In its call for differentiation after the

achievement and assurance of sovereignty with national independence, the gender-oriented critic continues the vital calling for social change that is preconized by the revolutionary ethos that oriented the anticolonial struggle.

In this spirit, scholarship tends to highlight the bizarre connections between gender roles and sexual morality that was preached by the revolutionary nationalist movements with the colonial moralism imposed by the Portuguese *Estado Novo* (New State 1933-1974) regime under the autocracy of António Oliveira Salazar. As Hilary Owen explains in detail in her *Mother Africa, Father Marx*, the ways in which gender was conceived by the Portuguese *Estado Novo* deeply impacted the way gender roles are conceived in the colonies. Drawing from Ana Paula Ferreira's study of femininity propaganda during Salazar's rule (1996), Owen observes that the regime's stress on family ideology limited women to the domestic sphere, which was converted into the site of patriarchy. Equally, the model of hegemonic masculinity set by the regime stressed the white man's civilizing mission that is innately embroiled in paternalism. These models, later coupled by Salazar's political use of Lusotropicalist theory as developed by the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre, in his canonic *Casa Grande & Senzala* (1933), were fundamental in a post-World War II scenario in which Portugal was under pressure by the United Nations to let its African colonies go.

The Lusotropical argument was based on the premise of “[u]ma singular predisposição do português para a colonização híbrida e

escravocrata dos trópicos”²⁰ due to its “passado cultural étnico, ou antes, cultural de povo indefinido entre a Europa e a África”²¹ (Freyre 66). The bi-continental character of the Portuguese, thus would make him, always the male, “naturally” adaptable to the heat of the tropics and, conveniently, both sexually voracious – due to his half-Africanness – allowing him to mingle through the (ab)use of the colonized black female body and civilization-prone given the “righteousness” conferred onto him by his Europeanness. These characteristics, highlighted to support the argument of the innate Portuguese talent to be a “mild” colonizer, separating him from the forms of British and French colonization that were deemed cruel, violent and segregationist, were the prerequisites to defend a colonial enterprise which, based on racial mixture as it was, could not be labeled as racist and exploitative. Freyre’s outrageously softened description of the actual widespread practice of sexual abuse by Portuguese men in the colonies though, despite its sympathetic tone, did not hide the fact that the actual colonization did not only pass through the violation of the female black body, it depended on it:

“[O português f]oi misturando-se gostosamente com mulheres de cor logo no primeiro contato e multiplicando-se em filhos mestiços que uns milhares apenas de machos atrevidos conseguiram firmar-se na posse de terras vastíssimas e competir com povos grandes e

²⁰ “a singular disposition of the Portuguese for a hybrid colonization of the tropics”

²¹ “cultural and ethnic past, or better yet, a cultural past of a people defined between Europe and Africa”

numerosos na extensão de domínio colonial e na eficácia da ação colonizadora. A miscibilidade, mais do que a mobilidade, foi o processo pelo qual os portugueses compensaram-se da deficiência em massa ou volume humano para a colonização em larga escala e sobre áreas extensíssimas²². (70-71)

Hence, as Owen rightly points out, and informed by the work of Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Miguel Vale de Almeida, hybridization in the context of the Portuguese colonial enterprise was rather a tool for oppression than a weapon of liberation, as posed by the canonical work of Homi Bhabha. In such a conjecture, “[p]hysical hybridity thus has more to do with the affirmation of the Portuguese empire than its deconstruction” (*Mother Africa* 31). In the specific context of Mozambique, whose project of national identity was deeply grounded in an idea of *moçambicanidade* (Mozambicanness), “[i]nsofar as Marxist-Leninist national unification fell heir to a Portuguese colonial version of national homogeneity, the image of an all-inclusive ‘racial melting pot’ could continue to gloss racist and sexist exclusions in practice” (*Mother Africa* 28).

Despite its local colors, the problem Owen describes in Mozambique also affected the progression towards gender equality throughout the rest of

²²From their first contact with women of color, they [Portuguese] mingled with them and procreated mestizo sons; and the result is that a few thousand daring males succeeding in establishing themselves firmly in possession of a vast territory and were able to complete with great and numerous peoples in the extension of their colonial domain and in the efficiency of their colonial activity. Miscibility rather than mobility was the process by which the Portuguese made up for the deficiency in human mass in or volume in the large-scale colonization of extensive areas. (Putman 11)

Portuguese-speaking Africa. Not only were all five countries subjected to the same colonial gender policy, but they were also united in their pursuit a transformed socialist and postcolonial future under the banner of an adapted Marxism-Leninism. Notwithstanding the visible desire, at least to a certain extent, to address issues of gender equality within the nationalist movement that can be found in the surviving writings of Amílcar Cabral, Samora Machel and Agostinho Neto, the actual result may have liberated men and women from colonialism but not from the chains of patriarchy. Surviving the nation's independence either due to the maintenance of certain traditional practices or due to the drive for modernization, patriarchy found its way into the new societies that the nationalist movements struggled to shape. It was among the reasons which led progressive parties such as Frelimo, for example, to dismantle matrilinear social networks and practices in certain Northern parts of Mozambique, "effectively promoting more patriarchal social structures in the name of progress" (*Mother Africa* 35). Regarding Angola, Margarida Paredes' analysis of the journals left by the female combatant and martyr of the anticolonial war Deolinda Rodrigues leads her to state that "[e]m nome da unidade Neto esbatia as diferenças regionais, étnicas, raciais, de género, geração e classe. Em nome da unidade impunha o chapéu da ideologia socialista, a hegemonia não religiosa e uma nova moral revolucionária."²³ (4). Similarly, Aliou Ly's study of the role of

²³ "in the name of unity Neto minimized differences in the order of regional, ethnic, race, gender, generation and class. In the name of unity he imposed the socialist ideology, a non-religious hegemony and a new revolutionary morals"

women in the armed struggle in Guinea-Bissau shows that “when Amílcar Cabral and the PAIGC fought for independence, what independence meant to them was freedom from the colonisers and social justice for Guinea Bissau’s citizens. But the outcome of independence is a society that remains divided and unjust along gender and ethnic lines” (25-26). As these three sites were the ones in which the existence of people’s war could constitute the laboratory of actual social change, their relative failure in bringing about significant emancipation in the realm of gender corroborates Owen’s assertion that the Marxist-Leninist classic productive view of liberation was not enough to bring about a complete revolution. She remarks that the project “notoriously lacked a theory of gender struggle, with which to critique the patriarchal practices of men within the liberation movement itself” (*Mother Africa* 33).

The pervasiveness of colonial gender norms in the revolutionary movements and in postcoloniality was not limited to the oppression of the woman, however. Bell Hooks defines patriarchy as a “political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence”(18). This domination, though, is enforced in those born to the male sex as much as in those born to the female sex, and forms of

masculinities are held hostage to hegemonic forms widespread in their respective cultures.

When it comes to Portuguese-speaking Africa, Mário Lugarinho, in line with Owen's argument, points out the continuities permeating the construction of masculinities in the colonial and postcolonial times of Portuguese-speaking Africa. He draws attention to the binary opposition linking the nationalist definition of "New Man" – which, although different, was essential to the nationalism of PAIGC, Frelimo and MPLA²⁴ – to the Salazarist one. According to Lugarinho, while the Portuguese new man was intimately connected with "um modelo de masculinidade que emergia [nos momentos de ruptura com o Antigo Regime], identificado pelos valores que garantiriam a estabilidade da sociedade burguesa: a nação, a família e a propriedade"²⁵ ("O homem e os vários homens" 99), the model of new man privileged by these specific forms of African nationalism, despite relating to a Soviet conceptualization of the term, worked similarly to what it sought to counter. As he concludes: "[o]s regimes de força, tanto à direita, identificados ou não com a burguesia nacional, quanto à esquerda, na

²⁴ Lugarinho's account of the variation between the three forms of "new man" posed by PAIGC, Frelimo and MPLA emphasizes their different times and modes rather than any substantial dissimilarity in content. He states that, while the version preconized by Cabral is part of his theoretical formulation on the struggle prior to its success, essential to the revolutionary movement and for the implementation of the State – that he did not live to see independent –, the new man of the MPLA was developed in historical documents after the success of the nationalist struggle, and the version of Frelimo was molded during and by the struggle. ("O homem e os vários homens" 109).

²⁵ "a masculinity model that emerged [at the moment of rupture with the Ancient Regime], identified by the values that assured the values of bourgeois society: the nation, family and property"

efetivação de seus objetivos regeneradores e reformadores, também se ocuparam de colocar à margem os indivíduos que não se adequassem ao pretendido modelo [de gênero] hegemônico”²⁶ (101). A nationalist model which, to put Lugarinho’s arguments succinctly, replaced the colonial ethos of a virile white heterosexual male, a modern civilizer inheriting from the Portuguese “sea heroes” of their Age of Discoveries, zealous of family and property, with a virile black heterosexual man, a modern proletarian inheriting from the local “national martyrs” of their independence struggle, zealous of the common good and of the socialist revolution.

Departing from this postcolonial scenario of gender normatization, which takes so much after its violent, patriarchal colonial binary opposite, the present subsection of this study examines the ways in which gender is written in the contemporary fiction of African literatures written in Portuguese. The present focus on gender violence adheres to an understanding of the establishment of gender roles as a culturally enforced practice. Its excessive control and politization in the aftermath of independence allows us to see how this specific form of violence that was crucial to colonial times has survived different moments of each of the five Portuguese-speaking African countries’ postcoloniality, still shaping their society and imagination at the dawn of the 21st Century.

²⁶ “[t]he regimes of force, either to the left, related not to the national bourgeoisie, or to the left, in the actualization of their regenerative and reformatory objectives, have also marginalized the individuals that did not match the intended hegemonic model [of gender]”.

3.2.1. *Emphasized Femininity*

As we have seen in the previous section, women are pivotal elements in the colonial, anticolonial and postcolonial political and administrative projects in Portuguese-speaking Africa. Having had their bodies programmatically used as vessels in which both the colonial empire and the independent country were prepared, women have always been symbolically represented according to the ideology of the day. As Hilary Owen (*Mother Africa, Father Marx*) rightfully demonstrates when analyzing the case of Mozambique, despite being an essential rhetorical trope to the colonial Lusotropicalist project, women were impeded from featuring in it. As time went on, the few Mozambican women writers who managed to publish had to work “simultaneously within, and against the allegorical manicheisms of African nationalism and socialist revolutionary struggle that reduce[d] women’s perspectives to a single, fetishistic uniformity” (214). Nowadays, though, being marketed as “Postcolonial Exotic” (Huggan; Martins), “women must also resist being simply recast as the symbolic (and redemptive) national ‘interior’ that Mozambican male writers set out to rediscover” (Owen 221). Therefore, our quest in this section is to assess not only whether the status of women has changed in the contemporary fiction of Portuguese-speaking Africa, but also the ways in which the structures in place are kept in place by the use of violence.

In such a conjuncture, one is both surprised and suspicious upon encountering a corpus in which the majority of protagonists are female, as is

the case in this study. Of the five novels in our corpus, three have women as their protagonists although only one is actually authored by a woman. While, at first glance, this slight predominance might suggest an increase of female protagonists in the contemporary literatures of Portuguese-speaking Africa, which could indicate an interesting movement towards a wider variety of gender representation, a rigorous approach towards these narratives might alert us to the modesty of this supposed progress.

Tiara, Aurélia and Ludo are the three women featured, respectively, in the Guinean *Tiara*, the Santomean *Aurélia de Vento*, and the Angolan *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*. The first novel is the only one authored by a woman, Filomena Embaló, and the following two by men – Albertino Bragança and José Eduardo Agualusa. *Tiara*'s narrative portrays the trajectory of an exceptionally beautiful mixed-race, correct and fearless young woman into maturity amidst challenges such as racial persecution, exile, love, marriage, involvement with an African nationalist movement in the struggle for independence, pregnancy, abortion, rejection by traditional sectors of society, betrayal by the nationalist movement, betrayal by her husband, divorce, withdrawal and finally exile with the possibility of finding love again. *Aurélia de Vento* gives us a protagonist who, like Tiara, is an exceptionally beautiful mixed-race, correct and fearless young woman. Given that the five years in which Bragança's novel extends itself is significantly shorter than what we see in Embaló's, whose narrative unfolds across more than two decades, we have only a realist portrait of Aurélia,

rather than a *bildungsroman*. Nevertheless, she is also wronged by those who envy her and is despised by a female character who embodies the traditional world. The novel also features an abortion as its ending, although not Aurelia's but her stepmothers'. It diverges from the Guinean novel given that Aurélia rises from her adversities stronger than the protagonist in *Tiara*. Ludo, in her turn, is not easily described. The almost three decades of this postmodern novel's diegesis span shows a fragile white Portuguese middle-aged woman suffering from a psychiatric condition, whose symptoms are close to agoraphobia, who is still strong enough to kill a man, bury him, build a wall separating her apartment from the rest of the building and to live an isolated and barely self-sufficient life in blindness and undernutrition for 28 years. As an attentive reading of these three novels show, despite the similarities between their protagonists, an interesting variation of intensity in two key aspects can be found between them: centrality and agency.

Comparing the three narratives, we observe that, despite having women as their protagonists, or the central referential core around which the discursive universe of the narrative is constructed (Woloch 18), these three women are not necessarily central to the development of their stories. Another noticeable feature is the interesting correlation between the centrality of the female protagonist and the author's biography, as the centrality of each protagonist within its respective narrative seems to be higher to the degree that its protagonist shares more biographical similarities

with the author of its narrative. In this way, we have Tiara, whose centrality to her narrative is indisputable. One can chart important parallels between Tiara and Filomena Embaló, an African woman who experienced migration between African countries herself. Aurélia, on the other hand, seems to be less central to her own eponymous narrative since the novel disproportionately focuses on her father, Pedro Santos. Correspondingly, the resemblance between Aurélia and Albertino Bragança is more distanced than the one between Tiara and Embaló, as Aurélia and Bragança share culture and nationality, but are different in terms of gender and generation, while notably, these two characteristics are shared between Bragança and Pedro Santos. On the other side of the spectrum - in comparison to the correspondence between protagonist and author as found in Tiara - Ludo, whose centrality to a multifaceted and fragmented narrative such as *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento* reflects its postmodern contours, is at the same time, the least central of the three protagonists as well as the one who is most distant from her narrative author's biography. Ludo does not share with Agualusa either gender, nationality, color or generation and her centrality is rather reduced to the privileged point of view from which the story is told.

If compared in terms of agency, we notice a slight difference in the ranking between the three protagonists. While Tiara keeps her undisputedly top position, we have a noticeable exchange of places between Aurélia and Ludo. Interestingly enough, Ludo is portrayed as a much more active protagonist despite her three decades of loneliness and isolation than

Aurélia, who is portrayed as a fully functioning member of society. This difference gets even more prominent when we consider the aesthetic choices of both novels. *Teoria*'s use of a decentralized narrative structure relieves Ludo of the necessity of agency, as agency itself is often an issue that postmodern aesthetics seeks to deconstruct rather than reiterate. As a result of that, the novel provides us with a protagonist who is not necessarily the referential core around which the story develops, but rather an estranged point of view from which the reader – also estranged from the diegesis – can access the story. Offering, at times, an eye-witness account that complements the omniscient narrator's, Ludo is rather a strategic point of reference from which to observe Angolan history in development than a character who is an active subject within the society portrayed. In contrast, *Aurélia*'s realist aesthetics should give way to a more active protagonist, since, as posited by Antonio Candido “a personagem pareça o que há de mais *vivo* no romance”²⁷ (Candido, “A personagem de ficção” 54; emphasis in the original). The difference in terms of agency between Aurélia and Ludo, therefore, points to a lack of coherence in the way in which the Santomean protagonist is represented in the context of the aesthetics of her novel, which, when associated with the analysis of the centrality of these three narratives, shows an interesting pattern in terms of representation of the women as protagonists in the early 21st century African novel written in Portuguese.

²⁷ “the character seems that which is the most *lively* in the novel”

By observing the coupling of centrality and agency, the present analysis of these three narratives draws attention to the telling relevance of the character-space as an index for the analysis of gender relations in narrative fiction. If we follow Alex Woloch, who in his *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel*, sees the character-space as “the *intersection* of an implied human personality – that is, as Dostoevsky says, ‘infinitely’ complex – with the definitely circumscribed form as a narrative”, which is directly proportional to the level of centrality of a given character, since “our sense of human figure (*as implied person*) is inseparable from the space that he or she implies within the narrative totality” (13, emphasis in the original), we see that the more space a character occupies – either explicitly or implicitly in their texts – the more real, the more lively their personalities, their feelings and their causes are to the reader. In this sense both the centrality of Tiara and the marginality of Aurélia, when held against the aesthetics of their own narratives inserted in their own societies, seem to point to the tendency of the circumscription of African women to the realm of emphasized femininity even when they are conceived as protagonists.

In her foundational book *Gender and Power* (1987), R.W. Cornell has carved the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity which can help us to conceptualize the gender relations at play in our corpus. Essential to her study of hegemonic masculinities – of which we will talk more in detail in the next section – the term “emphasized

femininity” refers to the central role that compliance to male hegemony plays in patriarchal gender dynamics in which women are subordinated to men. It epitomizes the idea of a model of femininity which entails, necessarily, any form of submission to the hegemonic masculinities in place, which puts them in a relation of constitutive opposition to one another. Although specific configurations of emphasized femininity will depend, at least on the most basic level, on cultural specificities which are very local, it usually involves representations of women privileging the “display of sociability rather than technical competence, fragility in mating scenes, compliance with man’s desire for titillation and ego-stroking in office relationships, acceptance of marriage and childcare as a response to labour-market discrimination against women” (185). And most importantly, it is a normative model of gender held in place by the maintenance of a “practice that prevents other models of femininity gaining cultural articulation” (188), such as, we argued, the literary representation found in the characterization of the protagonists of *Tiara*, *Aurélia de Vento* and *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*.

The emphasized femininity found in *Tiara* is part of the aesthetics of her *bildungsroman* as it is the set of qualities that defines her as an exceptional woman that turns her into a heroine. As is widely known, the rise of *bildungsroman* in Germany as a narrative of maturation is closely connected to the maturation of their society as a nation. No wonder, as McWilliams remarks, that “the genre underwent [...] a (highly regrettable)

rebirth in the context of Nazi Germany, where the genre's close association with nation-building was given a new and sinister dimension" (6). Another example is the importance of the *bildungsroman* or *romance de formação* for the literature of a recently independent country from colonial rule, as Antonio Candido observes in Brazil, a place where the genre became extremely popular in late 19th Century, as the vehicle for a set of stories privileging local colors, flavor and rhythms and, mostly instituted as one of Brazil's literary cornerstones such as José de Alencar's *O Guarani* (1857). While the almost two centuries separating the emergence of the *bildungsroman* from the context in which it appeared both in Europe and Brazil makes *Tiara* a narrative substantially different from the ones found then, this form is clearly preferred to tell a story of personal maturation at the dawn of an independent country born through the violence of the liberation struggle.

Tiara is, therefore, a heroine who is in tune with her heroic time of transition into postcoloniality, which entails a transition between colonial past and independent future; between the traditional local heritage and modernity. That can certainly be verified if we agree with Downward and Summerfield (2010) who take Bakhtin's (1986) view of the *bildungsroman* hero as one that:

“emerges *along with the world* and [s/]he reflects the historical emergence of the world itself. [S/]He is no longer within an epoch, but on the border between two epochs, at

the transition point from one to the other. This transition is accomplished in [her/]him and through [her/]him. [S/]He is forced to become a new, unprecedented type of human being. What is happening here is precisely the emergence of a new [wo/]man. The organizing force held by the future is therefore extremely great here-and this is not, of course, the private biographical future, but the historical future. (23).

However, while Tiara's embodiment of the heroism of her time would certainly inspire a model of femininity that could be dissociated from any patriarchy-endorsing kind of emphasized femininity, her final sense of failure and consequent exile, in opposition to the journey of progress and development the form usually implies, show the impossibility of a woman matching the hero's intrinsic ability to overcome great obstacles. Tiara is, therefore, crushed by the weight of the patriarchal society within which she is written, whose model of femininity clearly entails a certain race, culture and behavior constantly enforced upon her.

Despite being disguised by the affable tone of the narrative and by Tiara's excessive righteousness, which supposedly justifies her quiet acceptance of adversities in general, an attentive reading reveals the violent way in which very specific gender roles are imposed on her. She is forced to let her first boyfriend go so that he can "fulfill his duties" by marrying an ex-girlfriend of his who is discovered to be pregnant. What forces Tiara to take such a decision is the certainty of the fact that, if unmarried, this

pregnant young woman who was a young professional of means would certainly be marginalized by a highly sexist society. Later, when meeting her future husband, Kenun, Tiara has no doubts that she is the one who has to leave everything behind and follow him, just as her mother followed her father. The connection between her fiancé's conditions and the country's struggle for independence, since he is part of it, adds extra pressure for her abnegation. Once it is implied that she would be serving both her husband and the nationalist cause, her acceptance seems doubly inescapable. In order to live her love, she has to accept the physical struggle of the war and the social struggle to adapt – “[...] entre tu e o Kenun estarão sempre presents as suas obrigações para com o país e o peso das tradições familiares. Kenun é um patriota e porá certamente os interesses do seu país acima dos seus, para não dizer em detrimento destes”²⁸ (Embaló 83). The situation leaves little room for doubt: Tiara's conquests in life depend on hard work and submission. Her ability to face material and social hardships, and to take the risk of falling victim to physical and psychological violence is what makes her “the perfect woman”. As a female friend of Tiara says to her fiancé in order to guarantee that his wife-to-be would surely accept all the challenges the relationship would impose on her: “O Suevo tem razão, não podias encontrar uma melhor companheira. Nunca conheci alguém como ela! *Tem*

²⁸ “between you and Kenun there will always be his obligations with the country and the weight of family traditions. Kenun is a patriot and he certainly will put these interests above yours, not to say in detriment of yours”

todas as qualidades que se exigem a uma mulher”²⁹ (Embaló 93; emphasis added).

These qualities consist of Tiara’s exaggerated willingness to accept all the types of hardships imposed upon her. She also constantly refuses to fight back. The appraisal of Tiara’s enduring qualities are used to keep her in a place of relative disadvantage in society for being foreign and for being a foreign woman: “Quem pensas que és tu? Não é por teres andado na Luta, que te tornaste uma verdadeira Muritiana!”³⁰ (Embaló 195). Tiara’s most remarkable characteristics are rendered into the omens of her defeat: her defiance of racist ideologies, by marrying a man from another race and another country, is converted into the reason for her matrimonial disaster; her rejection of the home as the only space for female performance and her active role in the struggle for independence become the reasons for her abortion and the loss of her ability to conceive; her inquisition of traditional practices become the reason for her failure to integrate with her husband’s culture; and her insubordinate character causes her to be ostracized by the national party after independence.

While Tiara’s own decision to distance herself from the party, her husband and from a culture that does not accept her could be interpreted as an act of protest, or a coming-of-age process of self-valuation at the end of a

²⁹ “Suevo is right, you couldn’t have found a better partner. I’ve never met anyone like her! *She has all the qualities one looks in a woman!*”

³⁰ “Who do you think you are? It is not because you’ve joined the Struggle that you became a true person from Muriti!”

journey of extreme social self-donation, one should not skip the melancholy involved in her decision:

Chegou finalmente o ultimo dia de trabalho no Instituto. Tiara sentia um certo nervosismo. Era Também o último dia de mais uma etapa da sua vida. Mais uma que terminava e, como há vinte e quatro anos atrás, de forma trágica, e com ruptura. Agora com uma dupla ruptura. Com a sua profissão e com o marido. No entanto não se arrependia da sua trajectória. Kenum e o Muriti foram fundamentais na sua existência. Com eles conheceu os verdadeiros valores da vida. Viveu momentos extraordinário com o marido, que a sua decepção presente não poderia apagar das suas recordações³¹. (Embaló 253-254)

Sadness and resignation followed by a quick act of self-consolation, neutralizing any emotional escalation to anger or revolt, mark Tiara's acceptance of her defeat. She loses the battle in the public arena of heroes, and exiles herself to the countryside, to a small village where, once upon a time, her matrimonial life had been happy. Her removal from the public sphere to the domesticity of the private environment, into which Tiara is

³¹ Finally the last working day at the Institute came. Tiara was a little nervous. It was also the last day of stage of her life. Another one that ended and, just like the one twenty years ago, tragically and with a rupture. This time with a double rupture. She broke with her profession and with her husband. Yet she did not regret her trajectory. Kenum and Muriti were essential in her existence. With them she found the true values in life. She lived extraordinary moments with her husband that her current disappointment could not erase from her memory”

violently pushed by all those who did not accept her, such as her mother-in-law, members of the start-party and of the local party-elite, is crowned by the consolation prize, à la *Deus ex machina*, of finding love once again in the arms of her already forgotten first love, now conveniently free and ready to catch up with what their relationship could have been. If there is one lesson to be learned from Tiara's coming-of-age story, published at the outset of the 21st Century, is that although women can help men destroy colonialism, they can hardly defeat patriarchy and definitely need men to have a happy life.

Tiara's role as a protagonist and her centrality to the story, therefore, do not amount to a celebration of liberation and empowerment of women, but constitute a first-hand feminine account of the undeniable weight of male hegemony encrusted in tradition as well as in nationalist modernity, from which she, as a woman and because a woman, seem unable to escape. Tiara's struggle is one that is against the violent methods of exclusion to which she is constantly subjected. As she is a woman and not from the country of her husband, her subalternity is doubled because she cannot fulfil the female role of cultural reproducer, a role that is assigned to the local women, nor is she allowed to act freely in the public sphere. The social tension we detect in the textual fabric is translated into the novel's aesthetic to the extent that we see a romantic heroine fail in her social goals and retreat from public life. The novel's inherent commitment to history does not leave room for a female heroine to win, registering a pattern of

submission to the inevitable persistence of a patriarchy kept in place by men, women and by a nationalism that depends on the role of women as biological and cultural gatekeepers of the nation (Yuval-Davies *Gender and Nation*).

In a related manner, Aurélia's failure to constitute the actual center of convergence in the realist *Aurélia de Vento* attests to the weight of social conventions. The result, therefore, is a story in which she is written as an admirable, beautiful and complacent example of emphasized femininity. Aurélia is a character seen from the outside by an omniscient narrator who keeps her almost voiceless. It is not until page sixty-five of a novel with one hundred and fifty pages that we have the first segment of direct speech by Aurélia, which happens in the context of her meeting with a friend and lawyer to obtain advice regarding her father's property dispute with the State:

- O que é que aconteceu para ter hoje à minha frente a mulher mais inteligente e mais popular desta cidade? [...]

- Obrigada, doutor Altino. Mas o que o senhor diz é um exagero que não posso aceitar como verdade. Se o fizesse, estaria a ofender as mulheres verdadeiramente inteligentes e famosas da capital... Aceito que não sejam assim tantas, mas, em todo o caso, creio não pertencer ao grupo... – Riu-se também e Altino pôde aperceber-se melhor da beleza daquela mulher que quase toda a cidade admirava. Sim,

sem quaisquer sofismas, Aurélia era bela e muita razão tinha o despachante de a tratar com o desvelo que o fazia, pois não era fácil ter a ocasião de partilhar o destino como alguém como ela.

Invadiu-o, por momentos, uma incomum sensação de inveja de João Lourenço, mas logo se recompôs e, dirigindo-se para o centro da sala que servia de antecâmara ao gabinete, convidou-a a sentar.³² (Bragança 65)

The quote gives a clear example of how Aurélia is characterized during the narrative. Utterly admired or envied, the character is constantly evoked using open declarations of her exemplary qualities – her beauty, sense of social duty and justice, intelligence and many others. However, as we see through her performance in the narrative, the first quality she demonstrates is what could be called an inflated display of modesty which is followed not by an expansion of her interior dimension, but by the impression she makes on her male interlocutor which, again, is constituted solely of compliments. Next, before the development of the actual conversation between both characters, we have the insertion of a small

³² - How come I have in front of me the most intelligent and beautiful woman of town? . . . / - Thank you, Dr. Altino. But what you're saying is an exaggeration and I can't accept as true. If I did I'd be offending the truly famous and beautiful women in the capital . . . I know they are not that many, but I don't think I belong to the group anyway . . . – She smiled and Altino could see more clearly the beauty of that women admired by everyone in town. Aurélia was beautiful indeed and her husband was right to treat her so well, it wasn't easy to find such a person to share a life with. / He was invaded briefly by an unusual feeling of envy of João Lourenço, but soon he came back to senses and, walking towards the center of the waiting room of his office, he invited her to take a seat”

section in which we are told of the instant jealousy the lawyer had of Aurélia's husband for having such a wife. Here, even in the section where Aurélia can actually be heard, what we have is a description of how, almost inevitably, she can only be an object of desire, an example of the modern woman and emphasized femininity.

Aurélia's lack of agency and centrality in the novel becomes evident when we look at the space given to her as a character. Of the seventeen parts of the story, Aurélia's voice is heard in no more than four of them. Her interventions, though, are written in the style of the quote above: brief sections of direct speech followed by the addition of little to no psychological expansion. These, when they exist, are disproportionately attributed to male characters. Furthermore, as a more detailed look into the narrative shows, it is possible to state that Aurélia is not the central character even in the sections of the novel which are directly connected to her. The two examples are: the section in which she visits the lawyer Altino Castro in order to have him intervene in her father's court case against the State (chapter V), and the anniversary celebration of the association that she manages (chapter IX). While in the first instance Aurélia's presence ends up emphasizing the legitimacy of her father's claim, in the second, she is the magnetic persona around which all the influential people of the city gravitate. Again, the whole scene seems to serve a different purpose than to draw our attention to developments connected to the life of Aurélia. It highlights instead her father's worthiness as he poses a key question to the

guest lecturer of the night, showing that Pedro Santo's abomination of slavery indicates a righteousness of character that transcends the color of his skin.

Always mentioned but never really the center of the narrative as a whole, we can say that Aurélia's character is the embodiment of a number of important qualities in the Santomean society. Her function is to serve as a reagent, written to the narrative as a device to reveal the nature and the intention of the characters with whom she reacts. For this reason she speaks less than she is spoken about, as it is against her example of unshakable virtue, which is actually the embodiment of emphasized femininity, that the vice of the Santomean society is revealed. The latent violence of this process of reaction is expressed through the narrative as we not only witness how Aurélia's exemplary virtuosity is constantly policed, but also how that the revelation of other characters' flaws or virtues is dependent on how they act upon her person, threatening her physical and moral well-being. Significantly, the narrative starts with her husband's decision to investigate accusations of his wife's unfaithfulness, even when they were made by a relative who is known to be unreliable, and ends around where she almost falls victim to a violent attack that was ordered by her jealous stepmother. If anything, it is clear that Aurélia's excellence in performing her role of emphasized femininity is the very source of her potential ruin, as her flawlessness seems to threaten both non-hegemonic masculinities and other forms of femininity.

While the ways in which the protagonists of *Tiara* and *Aurélia de Vento* are written point to a rather similar pattern that highlights how impossible it is for these women to achieve success and recognition, both in public and in private, the apparent difference between these two protagonists and the case of Ludovica Fernandes Mano might be just superficial. It is true that *Teoria Geral do Esuqecimento*'s postmodern features move away from the aesthetics of a grand-narrative, opting for a prismatic structure of multiple voices and perspectives. Nevertheless, Ludo still manages to have agency, to have her own voice, to develop as a character by undergoing a deep transformation and to overcome her fears. It is also true that the character-space given to Ludo throughout the narrative is big enough to keep her role as a pivotal character in the story even despite the narrative's concern with the introduction of a significant number of characters and their life trajectories. Yet, in a way that relates to the roles of Tiara and Aurélia, Ludo is not made into the main human material whose successful development is the central point of the narrative. Her point of view is privileged by the symbolism of her ex-centric position and by her estrangement as she is a psychologically disturbed, unmarried and unsuccessful white Portuguese spinster. From her marginal position and faulty eyes, one can see the contradictions of both the colonial and of the post-independence system.

Seen this way, akin to what happens with Tiara and Aurélia, the centrality of Ludo is not the symbol of female resistance, development and

empowerment that is necessary if one is willing to counter the predominance of narrative models that emphasize female subservience. Her character construction as a protagonist, on the contrary, may reinforce the existent sexist structure by reiterating it and by not offering a way out for Ludo. Being the only one amongst our three protagonists who clearly defies certain aspects of emphasized femininity - as she is not depicted as beautiful, pleasant, motherly or necessarily kind, and as she shoots a man dead and prefers the company of a dog called Phantom – Ludo is the most marginalized of the three. Her isolation develops to the extreme of physical separation when she erects a wall that cuts her off from the outside world.

The only one among our three protagonists who shows a real commitment to changing the status quo, notwithstanding her failure to do so, is Tiara, a character in a novel written by a woman. As the present reading of these novels has shown, male portraits of femininity in the literatures of Portuguese-speaking Africa are still reproducers of a very stable model of femininity, in line with an idealized woman who is educated, brave, strong, beautiful and relatively submissive to the men in power. Women who do not conform to a model of sexualized femininity are depicted as unattractive, such as Ludo or Madalena in *Teoria* and the Teacher's Woman in *Campo*. Women depicted as candid and virtuous are also usually described as beautiful and young, which is not only the case with Tiara and Aurélia but also of the Village Chief's Daughter in *Campo*, of Ludo's sister, Odete, and Madalena in *Teoria*.

Moreover, intellectual achievement and detachment from the African traditional world are seen as highly praised elements of these novel's local models of emphasized femininity. Tiara, who excels in everything, is constantly applauded for her two bachelors (law and history) and, notwithstanding her respect for the traditional world, she keeps a fairly critical distance from it. Aurélia is often referred to as "doctor", a title usually given to someone who has attended university, not necessarily to a doctor of philosophy. She is praised for her Christian devotion, which suggests her distance from other traditional African religious beliefs. Even Ludo, despite her ex-centricity, spends almost thirty years left alone with books and paintings, thus showing an intimate relationship with words. Additionally, the mistaking of her unwilled interventions for divine providence by her neighbors, who take her noises as manifestations of the local deity, also conveys a degree of distanced critical commentary in the story. Contrastingly though, the female antagonists in *Tiara* and *Aurélia* are enmeshed in the world of tradition and lack of formal education. They include Kenum's mother, who achieved the ruin of Tiara's marriage; Clotilde, who ordered an attack against her stepdaughter, Aurélia; and San Labeca, the Santomean nationalist who worked so hard to ruin the marriage of her daughter, Aidy, in *Aurélia de Vento*. These women who are openly associated with non-Christian spiritual tradition and a mode of living that is customary rather than intellectualized, in terms of the European standards of what is considered modern, are seen in an ambivalent way by the men

surrounding them. When facing these two antagonistic models of femininity, the educated, logical, righteous and revolutionary men populating these novels show an interesting, unresolved double allegiance. If their revolutionary minds make them love, desire and admire modern educated and critical “new women” such as Aurélia and Tiara, their nationalistic commitment to tradition makes them inert, fearful and respectful of women such as Kenum’s mother, Clotilde or San Labeca, all three committed to the destruction of our heroines’ marriages. Here, too, the nationalistic contradictions make themselves visible, and it becomes clear that the destruction of patriarchy is perceived as incompatible with the praxis of a revolutionary nationalism that relies on local difference to erect a national rhetoric that is capable of uniting their population towards the common goal of defeating colonialism.

Furthermore, the novels in which femininity is not represented in terms of oppositional models such as *Tiara* and *Aurélia de Vento*, draw pictures of femininity that are both greatly distanced from any notion of gender norm and where women are continuously targeted by sexual violence. This is openly the case in terms of the Teacher’s Woman in *Campo*, of Ludo in *Teoria* and Mirna in *Marginais*, who are victims of open and brutal sexual violence, but also the case of the Village Chief’s Daughter in *Campo*, and the vast number of women violated throughout the course of *Marginais*. It is striking to notice the pivotal role that rape and sexual exploitation play in these three narratives in which it is difficult to locate a

coherent model of emphasized femininity. In *Teoria*, Ludo's rape is a well-kept secret throughout the story. However, as we are told in the last parts of the narrative, it was the mix of her rape by a stranger coupled with heavy shaming from her father that caused Ludo to cut herself off from society. The scene, narrated in the first person, brings the physical and the emotional scale of the gender violence that will scar Ludo through life:

Rasgou-me o vestido, arrancou-me as calcinhas e penetrou-me. Lembro-me do cheiro. Das mãos, ásperas, duras, apertando-me os seios. Gritei. Bateu-me no rosto, pancadas fortes, sincopadas, não com ódio, não com fúria, como se estivesse a divertir-se. Calei-me. Cheguei a casa aos soluços, o vestido rasgado, cheio de sangue, o rosto inchado. O meu pai compreendeu tudo. Perdeu a cabeça. Esbofeteou-me. Enquanto me açoitava, com o cinto, gritava comigo, puta, vadia, desgraçada. Ainda hoje o ouço: Puta! Puta! . . .

A vergonha é que me impedia de sair de casa. O meu pai morreu sem nunca mais me dirigir a palavra. Eu entrava na sala e ele levantava-se e ia-se embora. . . .

Nunca mais consegui sair à rua sem experimentar uma vergonha profunda.³³ (Aqualusa 226-227)

³³ "He tore my dress, ripped my knickers, and penetrated me. I remember the smell. And his hands, rough, hard, squeezing my breasts. I screamed. He slapped my face, hard, rhythmic blows, not with hatred, not angrily, as though he were enjoying himself. I fell

In a related way, subjugation of women through sexual violence is the key ritual through which men seem to solidify their power in the oppressive structure of the camp in *Campo de Trânsito*. The Teacher's Wife is herself an object whose possession is an indication of power in the camp. By being a nominal possession of the Teacher, the Teacher's Woman reflects the kind of nominal power her husband has in the camp. This direct connection between the level of physical intimacy with the Teacher's Woman and male power can be verified both by the lack of description of intimacy between the Teacher and herself, and by the repeated description of her rape by the Director, the man with the most power in the camp. Henceforth, it is by raping her that Mungau legitimates his recently acquired power in the hierarchy of the camp.

. . . Mungau não faz o menor esforço para suavizar as intenções. Chega perto, agarra o vulto tenso, tira-lhe a enxada da estranha mão e deita-a por terra.

A origem do cheiro é indistinta, vem da terra ferida ou do corpo molhado do esforço, do suor de outono, e do trabalho; acres, um e outro. O som é agora um gemido que vem de dentro pois que a boca se mantém cerrada. Há ainda um

silent. I arrived home sobbing, my dress torn, covered in blood, my face swollen. My father understood everything. He went out of his mind. He slapped me. As he lashed me, with his belt, he screamed at me. Whore, tramp, wretch! I can still hear him today. Whore! Whore! / . . . / The shame. The shame is what stopped me leaving the house. My father died without ever addressing another word to me. I would go into the living room and he'd get up and leave. / . . . / I was never again able to go out without feeling a profound shame. (Hahn 234-235)

movimento ritmado como o do rio ondulando a espinha para poder descer seu curso, chegar à foz e expulsar no oceano as águas que carrega. E, finalmente, dois dedos tateando como antenas de uma formiga, numa deriva diligente. Tudo isso mais o escuro, que agora é pesado e envolvente.³⁴ (Borges Coelho, *Campo* 84-85).

Although rape of women in *Marginais* is often seen in the light of forced consent as a bargaining chip for survival, the same kind of game of subjugation is at stake in the other three novels. Seen in relation to each other, these three works offer us a panorama of the ways in which gender violence in the form of sexual abuse takes place in three key realms of life in society. While in the case of Ludo the sexual violence is amplified by its repercussion within the intimacy of the family environment, for the Teacher's Woman, rape mediates her connection with the institution of the State, and for Mirna, abuse is inflicted as another form of economic oppression:

O Calvário dela começou quando o gerente de um *snack-bar* lhe disse que com um corpo bonito como o dela podia ganhar muito. Servia os clientes de *top less*, levava palmadinhas nas

³⁴ . . . Mungau did not even try to mask his intentions. He comes close, grab her tense body, takes the hoe from that strange hand and lay her on the ground. / The origin of the smell is unknown, comes from the wonded earth or of the body wet from struggling, from the autumn sweat, from work; both are acrid. The sound now is from a groan that that comes from within because her mouth is shut. There is yet a rhythmic moveemt just like a river beding its spine as it goes down its course, gets to its mouth and expell its waters in the ocean. And, finally, two fingers like an ant's antennas groping diligently. All that plus the dark that is now involving and heavy.

nádegas e, como o salário era insignificante, saía com alguns que a presenteavam com roupas caras. Tornámo-nos amigos chegados no Restaurante Avenida. Na ocasião, ela recebera notícia de despedimento, depois de uma briga feia com o gerente por causa de um bife deixado no prato por um cliente. Ela encolheu os ombros, olhou para mim e sorriu. Emprego como este não será difícil de encontrar. O safado do patrão queria que eu fosse para a cama com ele por ter-me apanhado em flagrante a comer o tal pedaço de bife. É isso que acontece numa boa parte dos restaurantes e casas nocturnas desta ilha, disse Mirna com os olhos inchados de porrada e afogados num mar de lágrimas. Achas que eu ia me dar ao desfrute de dormir mais uma vez com aquele pintado? É um pintado sim! Seu corpo é coberto de tatuagens de todas as cores até o rabo. Trabalhamos como escravas, mas o aumento de salário ou paga, por exemplo, de um copo quebrado, inadvertidamente, é sempre discutido em cima da cama. Se quiseres ganhar mais tens de abrir as pernas aos filhos da mãe e fazer-lhes festinhas. Todo o patrão gosta de festinhas.³⁵ (Rocha 90-91).

³⁵ Her calvary started when the manager of a snack-bas tolder her with sugc a gourgeous body she would make loads of money. Se waited topless on the clients, they slapped her buttocks and, because her salary was insignificant, she spent the night with some who bought her expensive clothes. We became close friends at the Anevida Restaurant. Thta day she got the news she was fired, after a heavy fight with the manager because of a peice of

What these three passages of sexual abuse have in common is the fact that these women were already in marginal positions before being sexually assaulted. Ludo is already an outcast when she was young if compared to other girls her age as she lived an *almost* normal life (Agualusa 225). The Teacher's Woman is an isolated and voiceless woman in a prison camp run by men, and Mirna is exposed to the extreme poverty that threatens her survival. Next, we have these women's objectification by men. In the case of Ludo, the violence of her rape is amplified by the reaction of her father, who blames her for spoiling her virginity, which he sees as his possession. As Ludo clearly puts it, more than the trauma of her rape, what makes her withdraw from society is the shame inflicted on her by her own father. This assertion of male power through the free subjugation of women's bodies shows parallels with what happens in *Campo*, in which the rape of the Teacher's Woman completes a rite of passage for Mungau's investment of power. The skillfully written scene suggests that the possession of the Teacher's Woman ratifies and complete his upgrade in the hierarchy of the camp. The reference to the volume found when Mungau palpates his pants denotes the double sexual and literal meaning of possession anteceding the rape, the righteousness of which seems

meat ledt on the plate by a client. She shrug, looked at me and smile. Another job like that wasn't hard to find. The rascal of my boss wanted me to go to bed with him for having caught me eating the piece of meat. That's what happens in most of the restaurants in this island, said Mirna with eyes swollen from a punch and drwon in tears. Do you think I would sleep again with that man full of paint? Yes, full of paint! His body is covered by tatoos through his ass. We work as slaves but a salary increase or payback for a broken glass, for example, is always discussed in bed. If you want to get anything else you have to open your legs to the bastards and entertain them. All bosses like to be entertained.

undeniable to the point that he does not even bother to disguise his intentions. The imagery involving earth, the act of sowing and the fluvial metaphor that implies the rapist's ejaculation talks back to the camp's own distorted view of the philosophical role of labor and modification of nature to subjective development described in the previous chapter of this study. Just after the rape scene, the narrator states that “[p]assado um tempo a Mulher do Professor serena e cobre-se. *É agora muito mais humana*”³⁶ (*Campo* 85; my emphasis). In the sick logic of the camp, the rape humanizes the victim as if what is enacted on her body is the sublation achieved through an androcentric dialectics of labor, to which women relate as a resource of nature that is to be modified and worked upon.

The idea of women as the commodity of men in the realm of labor relations under patriarchy, which in *Campo* is painted in allegory, gains concrete contours in *Marginais*. The naturalistic aesthetics of this Cape Verdean novel leaves little room for doubt when it comes to the economic importance of patriarchal culture in subjugating women. “A fome faz com que as mulheres, que não tiveram oportunidade de estudar, que viveram a vida inteira subordinadas ao culto do macho, se entreguem ao cuidado de um homem que seja trabalhador para sustenta-las”³⁷ (Rocha 93). In a society in which women have little opportunity, those who do not find relative

³⁶ “after some time the Teacher's Woman calms down and covers herself. *She is now much more human*”

³⁷ “Hunger make the women who didn't have the opportunity to study, who lived their whole lives subordinated to the cult of men, give themselves to the care of a hard-working man to sustain them”

protection under the locks of abusive marriages early enough are recruited by the industry of sexual exploitation. Hence, these three examples bring up the multiple levels of violence that mediate the gender relations in our five novel corpus. The clear connection between sexual violence and marginality, as we have seen, casts light on the privileges separating the Teacher's Woman, Ludo and Mirna, and our two heroines embodying models of femininity, Aurélia and Tiara. While the two heroines enjoy social, economic, physical and psychological privilege, being brought up with love, education and resources, their three less fortunate counterparts are drowned in a sea of ignorance and physical and psychological disabilities as well as economic disadvantage. We should not forget that even Ludo, despite being a white woman in colonial Angola, is totally dispossessed, living as a maid to her sister who married a rich Angolan out of convenience, revealing the intersectional nature of women's oppression depicted in these narratives.

As a result, this analysis shows that despite the existence of female protagonists in contemporary African Literature written in Portuguese, women are constantly represented in ways that rarely challenge the oppressive nature of the gender relations within which they are locked. When compared, these novels offer a palpable picture of the intrinsically intersectional nature of the many levels of women's oppression registered in their representations. Showing the relevance of the combination of categories such as race, class, ethnicity and privilege to the many forms of

subordination of women by men, these narratives underline the intrinsically systemic character of inequality in gender relations. While women of the elite such as Tiara and Aurélia are forced to adapt to subordinate models of emphasized femininity, women on the margins of society who cannot fit the rigorous requirements of normative femininity are left defenseless and vulnerable to all sorts of exploitation, often sexual in nature.

Despite the fair argument that these works play an important role in denouncing the precariousness of the position of women in their respective societies, it is important to highlight that by not offering any way out for their cast of female characters, these fictional projections can also perpetuate their subordinate status. The lack of justice and reparation for Mirna and Ludo, and the non-recognition of the revolutionary potential of the Teacher's Woman's act of murdering her rapist, the Director of the camp, seem to ratify the inevitability of their disgraced fate for being born women and consequently, underprivileged. Equally, the celebration of the heroism of women who, notwithstanding their somewhat privileged economic and social position, willingly accept conformity to undeserved subaltern positions in society seems to promote a model of femininity that is strong and capable but ultimately, passive. Women, therefore, are held hostage to fictional representations that depict them as tropes, motifs and symbols rather than tridimensional agents, capable of promoting salvation for themselves and for others that are on the same political and economic level. To the extent to which history imposes itself onto these stories, the

verisimilitude of the novel where the transgressive woman wins is still hard to achieve.

3.2.2. *Hegemonic Masculinity*

Connell's 1987 study is clear when it defines hegemonic masculinity "in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women" (183). Therefore, as we have seen in the previous section, the assessment of the extent to which emphasized femininity constitutes a core archetype in relation to which other models of femininity develop is mandatory if one is concerned with the constant play of forces that characterizes life in society. Given its essential role in the maintenance of hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities, as inequality is translated in terms of subordination, attention to the constructions of emphasized femininities is vital for a clearer understanding of the forces that keep such structures in place. Having looked in-depth into the ways in which femininities are written in the contemporary fiction of Portuguese-speaking Africa, we now turn to the different models of masculinity that populate our fictional corpus in order to better grasp how gender relations are being immortalized in these literatures.

Before proceeding, however, it is important to emphasize that Connell's understanding of hegemonic masculinities does not only focus on the opposition between men and women but equally stresses the importance of the role played by the myriad subordinate or non-hegemonic

masculinities and different models of femininity that complete this intricate system of forces. Hence, she clarifies that “ ‘hegemony’ does not mean total cultural dominance, or the obliteration of alternatives. It means ascendancy achieved within the balance of forces, that is, a state of play. Other patterns and groups are subordinated rather than eliminated” (184). Additionally, force and violence constitute important components in this state of play to which oppression is key, as Connell argues:

though “hegemony” does not refer to ascendancy based on force, it is not incompatible with a system based on force. Indeed, it is common for the two to go together. Physical or economic violence backs up a dominant cultural pattern . . . or ideologies justify the holders of physical power (“law and order”). The connection between hegemonic masculinity and violence is close, though not simple. (184)

Therefore, given our understanding of the intimate and complex connection between gender roles and violence – be it physical, economic or social – since those roles are usually enforced on many levels, just as in the previous section, our analysis aims at mapping the models of masculinities that populate these fictional universes and to understand how they relate to one another. With the intention of complementing the previous section and to offer a more complete overview of the gender relations within our corpus and the literatures it represents, we will pay particular attention to the ways that masculinity is engendered by violence.

While our corpus includes three novels that invest in women protagonists, we have two narratives in which the protagonists are men. However, where one notices the emergence of a relatively uniform model of desired femininity ascribed to the women protagonists, a clear picture of hegemonic masculinity cannot be ascribed to the two male protagonists. Interestingly enough, while *Campo de Trânsito* and *Marginais*, the two works with male protagonists, provide us with quite dissonant models of masculinity, it is in *Aurélia de Vento* and *Tiara* that a more clear-cut type of hegemonic masculinity seems to emerge.

The two examples of hegemonic masculinity offered by the Santomean and the Guinean novels are, respectively, Pedro Santos and Kenum. Whilst this model appears in the two narratives in which the protagonists are women, a careful reading can easily illustrate the necessity of this model of hegemonic masculinity in relation to the construction of each narrative's exemplary heroine, Aurélia and Tiara. Nevertheless, even these two exemplary models of masculinity in their righteousness, fairness and commitment to national causes seems to illustrate Lugarinho's point that "[e]spremido entre o presente da vida colonial e a utopia futura, o homem africano, tal qual as Literaturas das nações africanas de língua oficial portuguesa, já seria um indivíduo dotado de uma identidade de gênero em crise"³⁸ ("O homen e os vários homens"134). This crisis, as

³⁸ "squeezed between the colonial present and the utopic future, the African man, just as in the African Literatures in Portuguese, would already be a man with a gender identity in crisis"

Lugarinho describes, comes from a maladjustment that is, above all, structural. If on the one hand “foi preciso que as literaturas fossem construídas a partir de formações discursivas que instalassem identidades rigidamente calcadas no perfil épico de heróis que se nacionalizavam”³⁹ (137-138), on the other hand, to the extent that these identities were built in reaction to the colonial way of life they were dependent on for their premises, any attempt to overcome them would certainly entail fundamental problems. It is for this reason that as much as Pedro Santos and Kenum are the closest one can get in terms of hegemonic masculinities modeled after the image of the national hero and consecrated through violent engagement with the national cause, neither of them can fully accomplish it. Whereas in the case of Pedro Santos, his skin color impedes him from fully embodying the form of hegemonic masculinity, and when it comes to Kenum, it is his inability to fully transition from tradition to modernity. By falling for his mother’s trap and taking a second marriage in the traditional mould, Kenum fails to comply with the model of a “new man”, whose refusal of African customs and traditions that do not match the cause of progress in the socialist mould is key to bringing about the revolution necessary to change the country after the achievement of independence.

Aurélia de Vento seems to build up a case in favor of Pedro Santos while *Tiara* shows disappointment towards Kenum’s failure to resist the

³⁹ “it was necessary that the literatures were built through discursive formations that installed identities rigidly based on the epic profile of the national heroes”

lure of his mother. They indicate that the problem with these attempts to achieve hegemonic masculinities is its very impossibility. These characters' inability to meet a normative model of gender reflects the lack of verisimilitude of the romantic model of masculinity that is shaped after the canonization of the national hero. Pedro Santos' and Kenum's slightly non-hegemonic masculinity mutually calls into question the inflexibility of the model of the native national hero that ought not to be of the same race as the colonizer. They also call into question the whole Manichean cultural order entrapment the possibility of non-hegemonic masculinity, since it constitutes the matrix from which the resistance to colonial models has been conceived. However, it is important to notice that while these characters' potential critique of their societies' hegemonic models of masculinities calls into question the kind of racial and cultural features chosen as distinctive of the "national man", they do not challenge the legacy of violence subjacent to it. Inserted into the novels that successfully give life to archetypal female characters, the slight incompleteness of Pedro Santos and Kenum as successfully archetypal and matching male heroes evidences, as Lugarinho argues, a male identity in crisis (149). This crisis nonetheless, at least when it comes to the central male characters of both narratives, does not indicate a break with the association of masculinity and the monopoly of violence – be it in private or in public – nor does it openly contest the masculine hegemony that is intrinsically linked to femininity.

If in the case of *Aurélia de Vento* and *Tiara* a problematization of enforced models of masculinity is somewhat veiled, the examples found in *Campo de Trânsito* and *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento* do so in a much more open fashion. These novels surprisingly do not celebrate the embodiment of the model of hegemonic masculinity, as they also treat certain aspects commonly prescribed to hegemonic males in these post-independence societies in a way that inspires a critique of the models. Looking at *Campo de Trânsito* from this perspective, we find the portrayal of a problematic social structure that is built upon the shaky pillars of patriarchy and the male quest for hegemony. The system is composed of three men in positions of power, and whose power, as we have noticed in the previous section, is directly proportional to their possession of women. The Village Chief has a daughter and the Teacher has a woman. However, as we have observed in the case of the Teacher, the power of these two male characters is limited by their sexual dominance over their female assets. Real power, as becomes clear throughout the narrative, comes attached to monopoly on violence, sexual dominance and material accumulation, which is epitomized in the figure of a short, tiny and manipulative Director. The pure force of Bexigoso or the ingenuity of Mungau is insufficient for them to hold power, which must be exercised in the physical, sexual and material realm. Seen from this perspective, the fall of the Director is the fall of patriarchy and of its symbols:

Só então e vira para trás, para o Director. Só então repara como ele é uma colina onde estão espetados dois paus de bandeira: numa das extremidades um pequeno pau de alumínio com um defeito se série; na outra tem as laças descaídas, enroladas em volta dos tornozelos. Traindo um miserável acto interrompido, agora suspenso para todo o sempre⁴⁰. (*Campo* 206)

Only after the Teacher's Woman's visit to confirm the death of her rapist and to reclaim the murder weapon does Mungau notice the Director's naked penis out, "suspended" for eternity. Resembling two flag-poles, the spoon that Mungau puts in his open mouth matches the phallus which, in the dismantled order of the camp, is no longer a vehicle of power but a sad reminder of the vileness inherent to that kind of domination. In this commentary, the flag-pole, the spoon and the penis openly evoke the camps' tripod of the State's monopoly on violence, economic resources and sex. If the revolution in the camp depended on mass disobedience from those confined to the labor fields, its chances of success are indebted to the death of the Director and to the gendered act of self-defense by the Teacher's Woman.

⁴⁰ Only then he looks back to the Director. Only then he notices how he looks like a hill on top of which are two flag-poles: at one end a small defective aluminum stick; at the other he has his trousers down, curled around his ankles. Betraying a miserable interrupted act, now suspended forever

When it comes to the representation of masculinities, *Campo* focuses on a systemic representation of the association between State, violence, masculinity and subjugation of women, while *Teoria* invests in a more personal and subjective perspective on it. *Teoria*'s expressive character, Monte, is the closest to a model of masculinity that we can find in the story. Having embraced the socialist idealism that is the moving force for the independence of his country, Monte unsuccessfully merges the models of the "new man" and of "the national hero", thus exposing these types of masculinities' inherent contradictions. First, we have the degree of proximity between Monte and his antagonist, Jeremias. While they seem to be part of one another as they are constituted by the differences connecting them in terms of ideology, and despite their clear differences in terms of the possession of women - once Jeremias tries to bribe Monte with the opportunity to have "many" but faces his executioner's satisfaction in having "one only" - they both see women in the same objectified and oversexualized light:

A propósito, que diabos estavas a fazer no prédio da Rita?

[Monte asks Jeremias]

Conheces a Rita?!

Rita Costa Reis? A Ritinha? Grandes pernas. As melhores pernas de Luanda.

Conversaram alegremente sobre as mulheres angolanas.

Jeremias apreciava as luandenses. Contudo, acrescentou,

nenhuma mulher do mundo igualava em tempero e destempero as mulatas benguelenses. Monte recordou então Riquita Baleuth, nascida no seio de uma das mais antigas famílias de Mossâmedes, eleita Miss Portugal em 1971. Jeremias capitulou. Riquita, sim, daria a vida para acordar uma manhã à luz daqueles olhos negros⁴¹. (Aqualusa *Teoria* 33)

The dialogue stops abruptly as the men arrive at the place in which Monte is to order the execution of Jeremias and his companion. The passage illustrates the two men's binary ideological difference sedimented by the same dose of sexism. Next, we have the vivid description of the secret price of Monte's heroism, constituted by an almost indiscriminate perpetration of violence for the sake of securing the socialist revolution. As the narrative shows, Monte's insistence on trying to perform a type of masculinity in the moulds of the committed socialist "new man" or the national hero is precisely what prevents him from reaching the dimension of redemption achieved by all the other characters – including Jeremias – at the end of the novel.

⁴¹ Talking of which, what were you doing in Rita's building?' 'Wait, you know Rita?' 'Rita Costa Reis? Ritinha? Great legs. Best legs in Luanda.' They chatted happily about Angolan women. Jeremias did fancy the Luandan ones, however, he added, there wasn't a woman in the world who could match the mulatta women of Benguela. Then Monte recalled Riquita Bauleth, born into one of the oldest families in Moçâmedes, named Miss Portugal in 1971. Jeremias concurred. Yes, Riquita – he would give his life just to be able to wake up one morning in the light of those dark eyes. (Hahn 25-26)

Evel Rocha's *Marginais*, in its turn, differs from what we have encountered in the other four novels studied given that it opts for painting a radically diverse portrait of its masculinities. Instead of focusing on the problematic, contradictory and virtually unachievable nature of the models of hegemonic masculinities circulating through independent Portuguese-speaking Africa, *Marginais* invests in the narrative of men who, at the margins of society, perform almost exclusively non-hegemonic/normative forms of masculinity. The impoverished Espargos neighborhood of the Cape Verdean Island of Sal is the stage on which characters like Sérgio, Fusco and Valdomiro/Mirinha perform their non-conformity in a seemingly natural and symbiotic relationship with their inhospitable environment.

One of the very few scholars writing about this novel, Mário Lugarinho categorically states that in *Marginais* violence is endemic ("O Homen e os vários homens" 173). Manifesting itself at all levels of the narrative, violence is a nodal factor for the development of these character's gender and sexuality, as rape constitutes the main initial contact with sex as experienced in the novel. In *Marginais*, rape is perpetrated by parents, police and strangers alike. It victimizes and marks the lives of young girls and boys. Many are the examples of girls who, like Mirna, started their lives as prostitutes due to a mix of economic deprivation and early exposure to sexual molestation. Equally, for boys, the way into prostitution that supplies the tourism market on the island is backed by explicit contact with sexual violence. Pianista, a character saved from police rape by Sérgio, later joins

the sex market by recruiting young girls into prostitution. Fusco, a declared homosexual, also went into prostitution after the economic ruin of his family caused by the arrest of his father who used to rape his daughter. Nevertheless, the novel does not seem to offer just a perspective locked into simple social determinism. Crossing gender, sexuality and class, the novel seems to suggest that not only *because* they are left over in the margins of society, but also *despite* such a state, one can easily live his/her own personal and non-conforming gender identity.

The performance of non-normative gender identities by the characters of *Marginais* seems to be an open strategy of protest and recuperation of individual agency in a society of bourgeois values that systematically excludes them, constituting what Connell and Messerschmidt have called “protest masculinities” (847). Vandalism, abuse of sex, drugs and all other practices condemned by the bourgeois morale of those in positions of power are the marginalized islanders’ exercise of freedom. Hence, homosexuality is seen as a natural and accepted practice that is not dissociated or diminished in comparison to heterosexuality. Sérgio’s own homosexual experiences are narrated with no harm to his masculinity:

No fim da aula, encontrei Fusco com o bolso cheio de moedas de cinco escudos atrás da escola numa cantarola desenfreada, folheando uma revista pornô e disse-me que só partilhava comigo as moedas de eu lhe penetrasse. Apanhei

mais um susto daqueles, Já vens com essa coisa de doido.

Sabes que não posso, é pecado.

Então deixa um gajo tocar-te punheta. Num riso apalermado e delinquente, contemplámos os pingos de esperma desaguados, em esguicho, como uma garrafa de champanhe nas festas de casamento.

Eu tinha fome e o Fusco tinha dinheiro.⁴² (*Marginais* 49)

Later, on the occasion of his homosexual relationship with Valdomiro/Mirinha, Sérgio plainly establishes how his sexuality does not interfere with his masculinity. Represented as an extension of affection, becoming, therefore, a much needed weapon to fight the injustice that victimizes those that are dispossessed on the island, sexuality here is seen as disconnected from gender identity. “O meu envolvimento com Valdomiro foi mais por compaixão, depois de saber que ele tinha sido abusado por um grupo de delinquentes. Quis ajuda-lo e perceber melhor o que levava um homem a escolher esse caminho. . . . Eu não amava Mirinha como jamais amaria ninguém.”⁴³ (*Marginais* 116).

⁴² At the of the class I found Fusco with his pockets full of 5p coins behind school singing happily, flipping through a porn magazine and told me he’d share the coins with me if I penetrated him. I jumped out of my skin, There you come with this insanities. You know I can’t, it is a sin. / Then let a guy masturbate you. We laughed delinquently as we saw the drips of watery sperm squirt, like a champagne bottle at wedding parties.

⁴³ “My relationship with Valdomiro was due to compassion, after I was told he was abused by a bunch of delinquents. I wanted to help him to know what makes a man thread this path. . . . I did not love Mirinha such as I would never love anyone.

Equally, Fusco's open performance of genderqueer identity is seen by Sérgio as a defiant act of courage. Therefore, for Sérgio, Fusco's feminine traits did not cancel out the crucial points of his masculinity:

Eu admirava o comportamento de Fusco. Rebolava a polpa obstinadamente, mas era arrojado. . . . Era como se tivesse transformado numa fera, um mutante que se libertava das peças de roupa feminina e da fragilidade de mulher para vestir a roupagem de uma fera ferida na sua dignidade.

. . .

Não acredito que ele fosse uma mulher num corpo de homem como ele gostava de afirmar. Acho que tudo começou com brincadeiras de menino, mas depois foi difícil contornar o vício.”⁴⁴ (154-155)

The perception of genderqueer identity as courageous and transgressive by Sérgio underscores the ideological factors subjacent to the way in which the masculinities of the boys of the neighborhood, grouped into the Pit[y]boys gang, clearly contrasts with their local example of hegemonic masculinity. Embodied by the wealthy, the greedy, corrupt and snobbish lawyer Dr. Apolinário, hegemonic masculinity seems to be experienced less as a gender identity than as a bourgeois value. For this reason, Apolinário's complete

⁴⁴ I admired Fusco's behavior. He would wiggle obstinately but he was bold. . . . It was as if he'd become a beast, a mutant who freed himself from his feminine clothes and from feminine fragility to protect his wounded dignity. / . . . / I don't believe he was a woman in the body of a man as he liked to say. I think it all begun as children's play, but later on it is difficult to quit the additcion.

ruin is necessarily preceded by a sexual scandal that destroys this position as hegemonic male. The tragicomic scene begins when the lawyer's wife, Dona Eufémia, decides to visit the office of her busy husband and finds him having sex with his driver. The scandal drove him crazy and he died under unexplained circumstances (213).

Put in relation with the other four novels of our corpus, *Marginais*' treatment of masculinity complements and advances trends that are already visible. It is clear that each of these novels contains major male characters who are simply unable to conform with norms of masculinity modeled after the socialist new man/the national hero. However, rather than jumping to the conclusion that the contestation of masculinities found is the result of a conscious effort of all five authors' commitment to deconstructing the idea of normative masculinities, we argue that the discussions of gender taking place in these narratives occur as an unavoidable effect of these novels' aesthetics. By subscribing to forms of realism that, notwithstanding their differences in terms of narrative technique, show a common concern with their respective postcolonial societies under the sign of the nation-state, these novels have to create internal universes that, in order to confer coherence on the narratives as a whole, need to balance elements of familiarity and of estrangement in relation to their own society. Therefore, given gender and sexuality's intrinsic importance to the very existence of the nation-state as both a cultural and political entity, their faithful expression in these narratives becomes an essential feature for verisimilitude

which works, collaterally, as a relatively reliable indication of issues with the very nation-state in question.

Consequently, regarding these novels' representation of masculinity, it is our argument that despite gender not being the core issue of each of these novels, the extent to which central characters are forced to adhere to or deviate from their respective norms of masculinity maintains a close connection with each novel's own general critical stance on its respective country. This way, Kenum's inability to move from tradition to modernity evidences *Tiara's* view of the country's own challenge in overcoming the problems Guinea Bissau inherited from colonialism. In *Aurélia de Vento*, Pedro Santos' heroism as man and citizen in defying the binary racial order put in place during colonialism shows the narrative's positive tone towards the postcolonial present and future of São Tomé and Príncipe. The violent exercise of hegemonic masculinities in *Campo de Trânsito* by the Director and Mungau's aspiration to it clearly matches the narrative's critical view of the institutional and systemic nature of oppression. Similarly, the violence involved in Monte's attempted performance of hegemonic masculinity works as a critique of the very model of "new man"/national hero to which normative forms of masculinity are attached. Finally, supplementing the critical portrait of masculinities within the boundaries of Portuguese-speaking African postcolonies, *Marginais'* choice to represent forms of masculinity that actively distance themselves from normative models

matches the novel's focus on those who are excluded from the national system of privilege.

Compared to other portrayals of masculinity considered in this study, the narrative of Evel Rocha shows interesting advances as it chooses not to linger on critiquing the hegemonic models of masculinity. The novel's abandonment of discussions centered on normative masculinities, instead, consciously embracing non-hegemonic males, radically changes the focus of the discourse and, therefore, directly questions the overall validity of the model as the example of Dr. Apolinário indicates. Moreover, the novel expands on the links between hegemonic masculinity, violence and national bourgeoisie as suggested by the previously analyzed narratives as it highlights the importance of class and force in the gender equation. As we hope to have demonstrated, *Marginais* naturalizes non-hegemonic forms of masculinity and denounces the reification of hegemonic masculinities, treating the latter as a trace of bourgeois morality necessary to the affirmation of the class' entitlement to the wealth and privileges it denies to those it excludes in order to exploit.

Despite reaching high levels of explicitness in *Marginais*, the close association between hegemonic masculinity and violence – often sexual violence – as the means for subjugation of non-hegemonic masculinities and diverse forms of femininity is perceptible in each of the narratives analyzed. As we have seen, gender violence is still deployed on an everyday basis as a weapon of subjugation that is shown to be as essential for the postcolonial

status quo as it was for the colonial one. If in colonial times, gender norms coming from Portugal decisively influenced the possibilities of gender performance by men and women, the internationalization inherent to the anticolonial movement that shaped the cultural practices of the revolutionary States pushed for the emergence of very palpable transnational gender hierarchical structures across Portuguese-speaking Africa. The societies imagined in each of the analyzed works of fiction show that heavy control of female bodies keeps the national sense of race, ethnicity and culture in the places that are convenient for the dominant classes. Essential to this order too is women's subjugation in the public sphere, their confinement to the domestic space, or their controlled participation in the political one. The control over the sexuality of women and of male bearers of non-normative masculine identities is also highly connected to the generation of wealth for the elites. These groups are easy prey for the sex industry, benefiting those on the tip of their respective pyramidal societies.

However, notwithstanding these constraints, we have also seen that gender can work as a site of empowerment as its intrinsically performative nature entails a relationship with the body that favors levels of awareness that are essential for the process of reclamation of one's identity in the contemporary fiction of postcolonial Portuguese-speaking Africa. Henceforth, we encountered the transformative potential of the exercise of non-hegemonic masculinities which, despite being painful and difficult,

sows the seeds of contestation that are so necessary for social change. Yet, the narrow extent to which this transformative potential is explored is an indication of its overarching patriarchal legacy. Its conceptualization only in the plane of masculinities reveals that even the attempts at transformation are not yet strong enough to cross the gendered line, which works as an essential reminder that the possibilities of much needed further changes are still a long way ahead in these societies' postcoloniality.

3.3. Memories of Violence

Another remarkable aspect of the novels that we are analyzing is that the narrative of the most subaltern character comes in the form of a memoir. *Marginais* is, before anything else, the first-person narrative of a wretched young man to whom none of the promises made by the anticolonial revolutionary movement came true. In a similar fashion, the stories of the marginalized protagonists of *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento* and of *Tiara* too are told from a very intimate, personal point of view that do not seem to bear any pretense for totalization. As a result, by offering a very critical and situated account of their respective societies in the aftermath of independence, these novels seem to offer a desacralization of an official discourse of national heroism surrounding those who, after achieving independence, assumed the political and economic steering of the country. By doing so, these narratives offer us fictional accounts that clearly promote a revisionist approach to official history, registering a violent battle also in

the realms of memory. Therefore, in this section, we focus on the pervasion of violence in the fictionalization of memory.

Given the widely known role of national literature in shaping identities and identities' intrinsic connection with memory, it is no surprise that memory has become quite an important topic for those concerned with the study of literature, mostly when the literature in question establishes ties with forms of nationalism. For this reason, when it comes to the study of the African literatures written in Portuguese, memory is quite a recurrent topic. The importance of memory in these literatures date back to colonial domination, when the territories which today comprise the five countries of Portuguese-speaking Africa were inscribed in literature almost exclusively by Portuguese authors who were deeply committed to the racist regime of domination. In line with Fanon who, already in 1964, affirmed that colonial racism was heavily dependent on cultural devaluation (*Toward the African Revolution* 38-40), Inocência Mata locates the beginnings of a systematic fictionalization of Africa in the literatures written in Portuguese in the second half of the 19th Century when, after the loss of Brazil, the Portuguese definately turned to their African colonies. According to Mata, the cultural production about Africa by then had an essentially subalternizing function, characterized by the representation of the continent's space-time as a hostile *locus horrendus* ("Literaturas em português: encruzilhadas atlânticas" 64). As Mata explains in detail, such a negative constitution of the African people, culture and space was at the heart of the colonial literary project as

envisaged by the metropole. By fundamentally justifying the alleged inferiority of the colonized people and confirming the need for a civilizing mission that constituted the façade of the colonial enterprise at that point, we can say that the first appearances of Africa in lusophone literature were marked by a violence of form and content that mirrored the violent project of domination in whose bosom it emerged.

In light of this situation, it is clear why the literary works produced in each of these five countries during the struggle and in the immediate aftermath of their independence have taken a radically opposite direction from the one chosen by most colonial literature. As Rita Chaves puts it with regards to Angolan literature, “[n]ão é de estranhar, portanto, que a idéia de libertação que marca o processo literário angolano seja assim atravessada por um desejo de resgate de um passado distante. Regressar no tempo seria também um modo de apostar numa identidade tecida na diferença.”⁴⁵ (“O passado presente na literatura Africana” 149). Furthermore, conjoined with the identity project visible in these literatures, was the acute need to fill in the gaps left by a colonial historiography and, at the same time, to accumulate material evidence of the cultural richness of the nations in search for independence. That, according to Chaves and most scholars who look into the issue, has definitely contributed to making these literatures into some kind of supplementary anthropological and ideological material. As

⁴⁵ “It is not strange, thus, that the idea of liberation that distinguishes the Angolan literary process is permeated by a desire to rescue a distant past. To go back in time would be away to achieve an identity woven in difference”

Maria Nazareth Soares Fonseca (2005) has observed in a study concerned with the literary registration of orality, the preservation of many items of these countries' cultural memories has relied almost entirely on fictional memory. Offering us an endogenous and more recent view on the matter, the young Angolan writer Ondjaki also stated something along the same lines in an interview. According to him “à falta de uma maior e qualitativamente relevante produção de ensaios históricos, é sobretudo no mundo da ficção – o que também engloba poesia – que a História está a ser escrita”⁴⁶(Leite et al., *Nação e Narrativa Pós-Colonial II* 105-106).

Not only circumscribed to Angola but extending itself though the other four countries of Portuguese-speaking Africa (Leite et al., *Nação e Narrativa Pós-Colonial vols. I and II*; Calafate Ribeiro and Semedo; Calafate Ribeiro and Jorge), the establishment of fictional memory as a site of condensation of national histories is seen by criticism nowadays as an inescapable fact in the cultures of this transnational region. However, due to the intrinsic relation between text and context, the modes of remembering displayed by these literatures in the aftermath of the independence of their countries still carry the scars of societies that were enmeshed in violence. Just as colonial domination and anticolonial revolution counted on battles fought in the realms of cultural memory, the literatures considered in this study seem to point out the fact that contemporary debates about these

⁴⁶ “given the lack of a bigger and better production of historical essays, it is, above all, in the world of fiction – which also includes poetry – that History has been written”

nation's post-colonial periods seem to be grounded in the clash between memory and official national history.

If we depart from Pierre Nora's definition of history and memory which understands memory as tradition or lived experience often brought to the present via the performance of repetition and embodiment, while history is seen as the "reconstruction [...] of what is no longer" (1996, 3), we see that some of the fictional consubstantiation of history and memory present in these literatures might be most accurately perceived as a process of turning memory into history. Although this process, as the aforementioned critical essay by Fonseca shows, does share some of the anxiety shown by Nora's conceptualization of *lieux de mémoire* – whose existence is tied to the belief that a socially engrained memory is effectively lost (1) –, what we find in the postcolonial literatures studied attests also to complex processes in which memory has a supplementary role in history. As such, we can highlight literature's negative and positive functions when it comes to national collective memories. At the same time that it prevents the total loss of certain traditional stories, modes of narrative or register that have been endangered by the succession of new beginnings that so deeply marked the histories of these postcolonial societies, literature too is a material site of condensation of new *lieux de mémoire*.

Notwithstanding its transferability as a concept, we should not forget that following Nora's usage of the term, to state that something constitutes a *lieu de mémoire* necessarily implies that the given object/subject no longer

takes part in a *milieu de mémoire*, which, according to the historian constitutes “settings in which memory is a real part of everyday experience” (1). Criticized by scholars such as Michael Rothberg who alerts us to the method’s “linear and binarized account of history and memory” (“Between memory and memory” 4), Nora’s rather rigid approach to the relationship between memory and history is certainly indebted to the historian’s place of enunciation: the post-imperial *milieu* of late 20th Century France. While Nora’s binary and linear logic is hardly enough to explain the whole of the multiplicity that characterizes postcolonial societies and their cultures – probably one of the reasons why postcolonial France was absent in his monumental multivolume work *Realms of Memory* (Rothberg, “Between memory and memory” 6) – his conceptualization can still be useful to us if we decide to focus not on the linear way in which he sees history taking over memory, but instead choose to concentrate on the intrinsic relationship that the theoretician sees between *lieu*, *milieu de mémoire* and experience.

Nora’s understanding of the emptied, inorganic and disembodied nature of the site (*lieu*) of memory in contrast with its embodied, live and performative mode of experimentation in an environment (*milieu*) of memory calls our attention to the form through which certain memories are cherished as history. Echoing Walter Benjamin’s interrelated view of memory and communicable experience (“The storyteller”), Nora notices in the French case, for example, that history and memory have only been united under the same *milieu* when put in service to the nation during the

Third Republic. As the historian explains, “[t]hroughout this period, history, memory, and the nation enjoyed an unusually intimate communion, a symbiotic complementarity at every level - scientific and pedagogical, theoretical and practical. The nationalistic definition of the present cried out for justification through a highlighting of the past” (“Between memory and history” 5). The break of this synthesis between history and memory happened in France, according to Nora, during the crisis that the country faced in the 1930s, “when the state was divorced from the nation and eventually the old couple was supplanted by a new one: state and society” (5). After this disintegration “the three terms nation, history, memory regained their autonomy: the nation ceased to be a cause and became a given; history became a social science; and memory became a purely private phenomenon. The memory-nation was thus the last incarnation of memory-history”(6). Distanced from the everyday experience, the memory of the nation needs reification, which leads Nora to state that in the age of the *lieux de mémoire* “[w]e no longer celebrate the nation, but we study the nation's celebrations” (7).

In its relevance to our object of study, Nora's view of the memorialization of the nation raises questions with regards to the role played by contemporary African literatures written in Portuguese in their respective processes. If we agree with Anthony Smith who, echoing Ernst Renan, affirms that “[t]he nation is built on shared memories of joy and suffering, and above all of collective sacrifices. Hence the importance of

battles, defeats no less than victories, for mobilising and unifying ethnicities and nations” (Smith, “Memory and modernity” 382). We can easily understand the organic relationship established between memory and nation in the literary works produced in the 1960’s, 1970’s and 1980’s. By then, the violence underlying the national project was taken as a creative one and its overall reflection in literature was positive, evidencing the national *milieu* of the memorialization of the nation. However, when it comes to more contemporary works of fiction, conceived in a time of relative peace as the political integrity of the States backing these nations is no longer under immediate threat, it is worth asking whether the nation is represented as a communicable experience of living memory or as a distanced historical fact. Does it constitute a *lieu* or *milieu de mémoire*? Also, given that the performance of the nation as living memory is crucial for the deliberation of its role as *lieu* or *milieu de mémoire*, how does it condensate in the aesthetics of the novel? And finally, what is the role played by violence in these fictional histories?

3.3.1. *Memory as lieu*

Directly addressing the establishment and functioning of collective memories such as national ones, *Campo de Trânsito* and *Aurélia de Vento* are the two novels in our corpus in which we find a more explicit discussion on the mechanisms behind the process of sedimentation of memories into national or collective histories. Despite approaching the theme in quite

diverse ways, both narratives offer a critical account of the phenomenon by unveiling the unnatural, highly ideological, historically contingent and even violent nature of the condensation of memory into history.

The management of collective memory plays a fundamental part in the development of the plot of *Campo de Trânsito* since it is vital to the organization of the activities developed by the State in the three-camp complex. While the concentration of the narrative focuses on the Transit Camp, which is the administrative core of the prison complex, we find out later on that the camp's main purpose is the triage of incoming prisoners. It is during their stay in the Transit Camp that it is decided to which of the other two camps they are suited. These two spaces – the Old and the New Camp – are where the truly central activities of the prison complex take place. The collection of truffles at the Old Camp and the extraction of naphtha in the New Camp are the economic activities that constitute the *raison d'être* of the prison complex as a whole. And vital to the undertaking of these activities by the captive labor force of the complex is the manipulation of individual and collective memory.

As our analysis of the novel earlier in this chapter has demonstrated, the docilization of bodies is a performative action destined also to have an impact on the mind of the inmates. Being the first stage of the prisoners' journey into de-subjectivization, the Transit Camp is the place in which the major investment happens in terms of disciplining the body, this being the more directed work, and disciplining the mind, which is more of a

secondary, almost voluntary activity. While the deprivation of freedom, the separation of the individuals, and the routine fashion of primordial activities such as eating and sleeping are consistently reinforced, the classes of the Teacher are not for compulsory attendance. The lessons are designed to attract, and consequently to single out, those more prone to intellectual activity, prisoners to whom the mere performance of body discipline lacks any correlation with the discipline of the mind. Those, such as Mungau, are the ones who have to learn the ethos of the camp - an ethos of transformation, as the Teacher's best disciple has put it during Mungau's first lesson in the camp.

The activities undertaken in the Transit Camp are, therefore, only initial samples of what is adopted systematically in the Old and in the New Camp. As the narrative advances, we understand that those who were successfully transformed into nameless parts of a transformed collectivity go to the New Camp. They are young, strong and alienated enough to focus exclusively on accomplishing the combination of their forces necessary to fulfill the task they are given. The Old Camp, in its turn, is the destination of prisoners who must pay for "memory crimes". The prisoners are old, curved and need thick glasses to aid their tired vision. There, these men's ability to remember is put in service to the State and against their own interests. They are the ones in charge of going into the fields in search of truffles. Given the rudimentary way in which they are obliged to execute their task, memory is a valuable asset. It allows them to locate, with precision, explored and

unexplored areas, or track truffles not yet ripe which should be later collected. It is through the careful scrutiny of the earth and the collection of truffles that, for Mungau resemble “little brains”, that the prisoners lose their minds.

Moreover, as idleness at that stage can give way to insurrection, when prisoners are not engaged in the work designed by the Director, they have to follow the lead of the Chief of the Village, who is the administrator whose memory and sense of tradition directs the remaining hours of the men in archeological excavations that search for the remains of an “Original Chief”. As it happens, the place where the Old Camp was installed had been obtained through the displacement of the Village that used to be located at that site since time immemorial. The archeological search, then, is a necessary act of reparation for the memory of the Village, besides being a ploy for keeping the prisoners’ minds busy. Underlying it all, there is the exploitative logic of the camps which, transformed by the Chief of the Village, gains the convenient weight of tradition. The seemingly paradoxical nature of memory in the camp – as both crime and virtue – puzzles Mungau. The Chief of the Village then, promptly offers the prisoner a clarification:

“Tens de aprender a distinguir lembrança de tradição, Prisioneiro”, diz. “Ambas dependem da memória mas são inteiramente diferentes. Enquanto a lembrança é um exercício individual e rebelde, fútil e pouco produtivo, a tradição é fruto da ordem. Estes prisioneiros chegaram aqui

com suas privadas e desprezíveis lembranças. Acusavam as autoridades de acontecimentos antigos, acontecimentos dispersos que hoje não fazem qualquer sentido. Aos poucos, contudo vão chegando à tradição, a este sentido supremo que é sabermos todos de onde vimos, esta certeza de virmos todos do mesmo lugar. E sobretudo, esta vontade de fazermos hoje como foi feito antigamente.⁴⁷ (Borges Coelho, *Campo de Trânsito* 102)

Spelled out in this quote, we have the importance of the ordination of memory into embodied tradition to which the discarding of individual memories is vital. Tradition is shown in terms that are similar to the ones used by Pierre Nora as this too is dependent on performance. However, the framing of tradition in the novel reveals its artificial nature, for it is evoked by the Chief of the Village first and foremost to answer his own identitarian needs that do not include the interests of the prisoners under his command. Nevertheless, the manipulation of tradition at hand has yet another layer that is carefully crafted by the Director. As we come to know later, it is the Director who, through the use of his network of spies, is the one in control of which archeological remains will be found and which must remain

⁴⁷ “You must learn to distinguish remembrance from tradition, Prisoner”, he says. “Both rely on memory but they are entirely different. While remembrance is an individual and rebel exercise, futile and little productive, tradition comes from order. These prisoners arrived here with their private and insignificant remembrances. They accused authorities of ancient things, events so disperse which today don’t make any sense. Little by little, however, they get to tradition, to this supreme knowledge which is to know where we came from, this certainty that we all come from the same place. And above all, this will to act today as we did in the old times.

hidden. Therefore it is he, or the State which he represents, that ultimately manipulates tradition in *Campo de Trânsito* - a cultural asset diligently used to serve the State's profit.

Notwithstanding its critical approach to the manipulation of tradition, the manipulation of history in its written form is also important in *Campo de Trânsito*. The role of registration and archivization to the State is present quite early on in the novel when Mungau is exposed to the Director's administrative folders even before meeting him in person. This is what leads the Director to entrust Mungau with the task of visiting both labor camps and to write down his interpretation of what he sees – “Pretendemos um relatório escrito (uma versão inequívoca, portanto) dos problemas que surgem, das suas causas e dos seus efeitos.”⁴⁸. (Borges Coelho, *Campo* 83). As we will see later, in the written and “unequivocal” account of Mungau, it is precisely the manipulation of what is seen that the Director wishes to read. Hence, Mungau's simple witness' account makes for a poor report: “Falta aqui no relatório uma crença, um empenhamento sem o qual a procura de entendimento da realidade se torna num exercício fútil, diríamos mesmo perigoso!”⁴⁹. Mungau still lacks the ideological commitment necessary to produce a piece of writing in tune with the openly manipulative mode of historicizing used by the State. As the words of the

⁴⁸ “We intend to have a written report (thus, an unquestionable version) of the raising problems, their causes and their effects”

⁴⁹ “This report lacks belief, an engagement without which the search for the comprehension of reality turns into a futile exercise, we could say even dangerous!”

Director evidence: “[n]ão há mal algum em manipular ideias. Pelo contrário, é para isso que elas servem!”⁵⁰ (Borges Coelho, *Campo* 147;148).

The manipulation of collective memory that is vital to the organization of the society portrayed in *Campo de Trânsito* shows itself as important also in the Santomean *Aurélia de Vento*. Still, in order to address this issue in his novel Albertino Bragança opts for a different method from the one chosen by his Mozambican counterpart. Instead of developing an entirely fictional basis for his discussion of memory, Bragança decides to directly relate to the history of his country. In this particular passage, the farmer previously wronged by the State, Pedro Santos, has already won the lawsuit over his land and is invited to join the anniversary of the association presided over by his daughter, Aurélia, who also invites a number of important political and social personages of the country (Bragança, *Aurélia* 93). As part of the festivities of the Association of Mutual Help, a non-governmental organization destined to aid the poor, a celebratory lecture that promises to draw on one of the most important foundational stories of the country is scheduled. The clash that will follow is already enunciated in the passage explaining how Aurélia managed to convince her father, a man unused to the company of the elite, to show up at the event:

. . . devia estar presente e usar mesmo da palavra, ele que incarnava, na sua opinião e na de muitos outros, o sentido de

⁵⁰ “there is no harm in manipulating ideas. On the contrary, that’s why they are for!”

justiça, coragem e de defesa intransigente dos seus interesses, como acontecera ainda recentemente. Como recusar se estes eram os principais temas a serem abordados pelo famoso orador . . . “Yon Gato e a reivindicação social no S. Tomé e Príncipe do séc. XVI”, matéria tanto mais aliciante quanto tão pouco se sabia dessa figura quase lendária, um cego à frente de uma revolta de proprietários em busca de poder político?⁵¹ (Bragança 95)

Delivered by an enticing professor with the suggestive name of Fausto Boaventura (or Faust Fortunate), the lecture is designed to praise the spirit of social justice upon which the liberation movement has imagined the nation. The story of Yon Gato, as told by Bragança himself in his capacity as a researcher, is the following: “Yannus (João) Ruiz ‘O Gato’, vulgarmente apelidado ‘Yon Gato’, fazendeiro mestiço que encabeçou, em 1553, um levantamento de proprietários nativos, em protesto contra o método de eleição de juízes à Câmara, os quais reclamavam para si o direito à respectiva candidatura e que para tal fortemente se armaram começaram a tomar a cidade”⁵² (Bragança, “Dia de Amador” 2). This revolt in which

⁵¹ ... he should be present and speak up, he was in her opinion as well as for others, a representative of justice, of courage and of intransigent defense of his interests, as it had happened recently. How to refuse if these were the main themes to be treated by the famous orator. . . “Yon Gato and the social uprising in 16th Century São Tomé and Príncipe”, issue even more interesting when so little is known about this almost legendary character, a blind man in the forefront of a revolt in for political power?

⁵² “Yannus (João) Ruiz ‘O Gato’, as known as ‘Yon Gato’, mestizo farmer who led, in 1553, an uprising of native landowners, against the methods for the election of local judges, claiming rights to candidate and for such they took up their arms and begun to take town

mixed race locals attempted to take over political power from the hands of the white colonial elite, was indeed re-appropriated by the liberation movement and by the government that took over after the end of colonial domination as one of the foundational stories that inscribes the desire for independence in the cultural genetic code of the independent nation. The exposition of this which constitutes not only a foundational narrative but a historical fact, was eloquently made by the invited professor. Its critique though is made by Pedro Santos who decided to intervene in the discussion that followed the session and ask: “aqueles homens que o senhor gabou bastante, tinham ou não escravos? Porquê então elogiar tanto a revolta deles?”⁵³ (101).

The scene, clearly designed to ratify Pedro Santos’ sense of justice despite being white and raised in a family of colonizers, also exposes the artificiality of national memory-making in the country in which the narrative is set. The professor and the elites surrounding him, including the very academy filled with its “attested intellectuals” with whom Fausto Boaventura would rather discuss, are the institutions responsible for choosing and shaping the memories to gain the status of history which are so necessary to summon up the sense of nation that fills in the shell of the State. In such a context, the critical intervention of Pedro Santos is amplified to reaffirm the character’s position as hero. The vigor of his

⁵³ “these man you paid praises to, did they have slaves? So why to pay so much respect to their revolt? “

criticism is guaranteed precisely by his position as an outsider in the realm of both the official institutions and of the environment of the elites. The placement of this intervention makes the point that what is chosen to be remembered as national history is what is convenient to the local bourgeoisie and not necessarily what makes sense for the population at large. For this reason, Bragança, with his “researcher’s hat on”, does not miss the opportunity to intervene in the history making of the country. In his 2013 article “Dia de Amador”, Bragança decides to recover the history of Amador Vieira, whose 1595 uprising against slavery in the country, despite being celebrated by the State after the achievement of independence, still lacks diffusion to the wider population - turning it into a “símbolo artificialmente criado e só aparentemente tolerado”⁵⁴ (2) for the people of São Tomé and Príncipe.

Hence, it is possible to conclude that what connects these two novels in their consideration of memory is a critique of the processes surrounding the erection of collective memories such as national stories and histories. As these novels show, the very institutional effort necessary to fix certain narratives already denounces the disembodied nature of the collective memories under construction. In the case of *Campo de Trânsito*, the distance between the State and the prisoners is so wide that it requires a whole project of memory reprogramming so that the institution can make some sense of them for the inmates. When it comes to *Aurélia de Vento*, this

⁵⁴ “artificially created symbol that is only apparently tolerated”

distance comes to the fore as it becomes clear that the ideological reasons behind the choice of what is to be celebrated as collective memory do not really represent the aspirations of the population at large constituting, as such, what Bragança calls a tolerated artificial symbol. The much reinforced distance between what is represented as collective memory and those represented as the collective in these two novels strongly suggests a distance between the project of national collective memories and a nation's people. It shows that the national projects envisaged by the governing elites are very distant from those these elites are supposed to represent, which in the terms carved out by Pierre Nora would make these national memories into *lieux de mémoire* rather than *milieux de mémoire*.

The representation of national memory as *lieu* or site rather than *milieu* or environment evidences the incommunicability of the national experience as practiced by the elite. As far as these novels are concerned, by constituting a *lieu*, national memory is thus represented as “extreme ideological, full of nationalism and far from being neutral or free of value judgements” (den Boer 21). Moreover, this way of representing a national collective memory attests to the historicization or disembodiment of nationalism itself. By portraying it as a maneuvering tool to preserve political and economic power in the hands of a self-serving elite, these novels' fictional rendering of the relationship between national memory and nationalism shows a mismatch that clearly contrasts with the history of African literatures written in Portuguese.

Memory, therefore, is portrayed as something that has to be reclaimed from the institutions and given back to the people. This is suggested in *Aurélia de Vento* as Fausto's dismissive answer to Pedro Santos, which pulls Pedro Santos even further away from the institutions. This passage, in fact, marks a turn in the story since what we have from that point on concerns Pedro Santos' family more than his public life. The focus on the hostility of Clotilde towards Aurélia takes the novel to the terrain of the mystic and fantastic, of the intimate and yet collective world of spirituality and tradition. In a different way, this reclamation in *Campo de Trânsito* is tied to the notion of revolution. There, despite the efforts of the Director and his administrators such as the Teacher and the Chief of the Village, the order in the complex of camps crumbles exactly because of manipulation. At the end of the narrative, the Director's decision to steal and hide the recently found skull of the Original Chief puts the workers of the Old Camp off-balance and prompts them to start a revolution that spreads though the whole prison complex. This way, therefore, it is possible to conclude that one of the most vital aspects of State-building in this novel by João Paulo Borges Coelho is not only the management of memory, but its key role in the antagonistic processes of domination and revolution, which is a way to conceive memory that is further explored by *Tiara*, *Marginais* and *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*.

3.3.2. *Towards a multidirectional memory*

One of the most visible differences in terms of the role given to memory in *Tiara*, *Marginais* and *Teoria* from the one in *Aurélia* and *Campo* is these three novels' choice in focusing on individual memories. While the two previously analyzed narratives problematize the constitution of collective memories, their Guinean, Cape Verdean and Angola counterparts invest on the transformative potential of personal archives in collective memories. Such a focus adds an important dimension to the understanding of the dynamics of collective memory in the literatures of Portuguese-speaking Africa given that it evidences the violence inherent to the clash between canonic and archival memory underlying the solidification of collective memories.

The concept of canonic and archival memory put forward by Aleida Assman can help us to understand how these instances of personal memory interact with institutionalized vehicles of memory. In "Canon and archive", Assman calls our attention to the fact that collective memories are largely composed by the active efforts of institutions such as the State who decides on the memories to canonize and the ones to store out of sight, often in the form of an archive. Drawing on the example of institutions like the museum, Assman concentrates on the material dimension of the archive as that which is concrete and stored away from public gaze, making it into "a space that is located on the border between forgetting and remembering; its materials are preserved in a state of latency, in a space of intermediary storage

(Zwischenspeicher)” (103). However, seen as a concept rather than a strictly material artifact, the notion of archival memory can be quite useful for the understanding of the memory dynamics at stake in these three novels. As their analysis will demonstrate, giving voice to characters who are marginalized in their respective societies, these narratives critically supplement mainstream heroic views of the nationalist movement as well as of the revolutionary bourgeoisie that seized power in these countries’ aftermaths of independence.

One of the most striking differences from the previous novels analyzed in the representation of memory found in *Tiara*, *Aurélia* and *Teoria* is that, in these novels, the perspective is almost exclusively that of characters victimized by the system, leaving very little space for the furthering of the psychological profile of members of the political and economic elites of the societies represented in each narrative. *Tiara* is the story of a woman who is denied the chance to participate in the construction of the country she helped to liberate; *Marginais* is the memoir of a young man who is systematically excluded from society; and *Teoria* is a compound of stories that gives space mostly to the narratives of those who were victims of the colonial/post-independence political and economic systems. Even the two characters that had an active role in the oppressive systems to which they belonged such as Monte and Jeremias are portrayed, to quite a large degree, as victims themselves. They are constantly tormented by the

gruesomeness of their past actions and can be seen as victims of their movements' respective ideologies.

In a clear supplementary relation with the treatment given to memory in *Campo de Trânsito* and *Aurélia de Vento*, where the focus rests on the relationship between collective memory and those in positions of power, these three novels' preference for the archival memory of the excluded deconstructs the process through which certain topics come to constitute *lieux de mémoire*. As it uncovers the fabricated, incomplete and ideology-laden nature of this condensation of memory, it exposes its inherently disembodied condition. In the light of this we can affirm, with Assman, that the relationship between canonic and archival memory in these five narratives is one in which the former represents a memory that is canonic because it is invested with aura and the latter, being archival, has the capability to destroy such aura (102). This is verifiable when we compare the role ascribed to the skull of the Original Chief in *Campo* or to the narrative of Yon Gato in *Aurélia*, with the way Tiara deals with her memory. After tasting the bitterness of exclusion by her adoptive country, Muriti, the heroine decides to go back to her country of origin, where she had an idyllic childhood. The confrontation, though, is disappointing: "Tiara chegou, finalmente, à conclusão que o seu país era uma terra de sonho, situada algures num mundo imaginário desprovido de uma dimensão

terrestre”⁵⁵ (*Aurélia* 214). Nonetheless, the character takes this reality shock as a therapeutic exercise. Upon the suggestion that it would have been better if she did not revisit the country, Tiara is assertive: “Oh, não, pelo contrário! Ainda bem que fui. Era preciso! Eu tinha contas a ajustar com meu passado, agora está feito. Agora posso continuar a minha caminhada sem olhar para trás”⁵⁶ (215).

Tiara’s attitude in coming to terms with her past is as much in the plot as it is in the place occupied by the novel in the national canon. *Tiara*’s critical revisionism in tracing the important structural problems of the country’s aftermath of independence to its contradictions in the bosom of the Liberation Movement clearly questions the narrative’s aura of heroism that protects it from critique. In a related manner, *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*’s voicing of so many narratives of victimization offers another dimension of the country’s history as it retells the first three decades of post-independence Angola from the perspective of the system’s victims. While Agualusa’s theory of oblivion might seem contradictory at first, given that it so openly invests in acts of remembrance, a careful examination of the novels’ representation of the dynamic between active memory and forgetting in the arena of collective memory can certainly elucidate the pertinence of the title. As performed throughout the narrative, forgetting is a

⁵⁵ “Tiara finally understood that her country was a land of dreams, place somewhere in her imagination and devoided of earthly existence”

⁵⁶ “Oh, no, on the contrary! I am glad I went there. It was necessary! I had some catch up to do with my past, and now it is done. Now I can go on with my trajectory without looking back”

strategy deployed for the maintenance of the status quo. Perpetrators such as Monte were the ones willing to forget and to be forgotten:

[Monte e]vita, inclusive, recorder os anos setenta, quando para preservar a revolução socialista, se permitiram, para utilizar um eufemismo grato aos agentes da polícia política, certos excessos.

. . .

Certas pessoas padecem do medo de ser esquecidas. A essa patologia chama-se atazagorafobia. Com ele sucedia o oposto: vivia no terror de que nunca o esquecessem. Lá, no Delta do Okavango, sentira-se esquecido. Fora feliz.⁵⁷

(Aqualusa, *Teoria* 65, 187)

Forgetting, therefore, is an important aspect concerning content and context since its presence in the narrative emulates the actual strategies used by real institutions to keep certain past actions away from discussion in the public arena which, in a country such as Angola, is a constantly used device given the position still occupied by its perpetrators in the contemporary regime. As Andreas Langenohl describes it when observing the processes of memory and reconciliation in postauthoritarian societies, “[i]f perpetrators or their supporters still hold influential positions in society [...] the

⁵⁷ [Monte]’d even avoided recalling the seventies, when in order to preserve the socialist revolution, certain excesses – to use a euphemism for which we’re indebted to the agents of the political police – were permitted. / There are some people who experience a fear of being forgotten. It’s a pathology called athazagoraphobia. The opposite happened to him, he lived in terror that he would never be forgotten. There, on the Okavango Delta, he had felt forgotten. He had been happy (Hahn 63; 194)

postauthoritarian government sees itself exposed to pressure to advocate impunity” (164). However, despite not yet fitting into all the requirements for being called a postauthoritarian society, given that those in power during the hardest times of the regime are still part of the local political apparatus, the emergence of such a narrative certainly signals progress towards the breaking of this pattern. Notably, in the universe of the novel, the person who wants to forget the most is the only one among the core characters who dies. The message conveyed is clearly communicated through the voice of the character that was once the symbol of colonial oppression and violence. The former captain of the Portuguese army, now called Jerónimo, chooses to remember as he confesses to Ludo to be the murderer of her sister and brother in law:

Não se atormente mais. Os erros nos corrigem. Talvez seja necessário esquecer. Devíamos praticar o esquecimento.

Jerónimo abanou a cabeça, irritado. Rabiscou mais umas palavras no caderno. Entregou-o ao filho:

O pai não quer esquecer. Esquecer é morrer, diz ele.

Esquecer é uma rendição.⁵⁸ (Aqualusa, *Teoria* 221)

The attitude of Jeremias/Jerónimo clearly gestures towards a process of reconciliation of the country with its violent Portuguese colonial past. Equally, Ludo’s transformation and slow process of integration with the

⁵⁸ Don’t torture yourself any more. Our mistakes correct us. Perhaps we need to forget. We should practise forgetting, reaching for oblivion.’ / Jeremias shook his head, irritated. He scribbled a few more words in the little notebook. He handed it to his son. / ‘My father doesn’t want to forget. Forgetting is dying, he says. Forgetting is surrender.’ (Hahn 229)

country is another indication that, in the realm of the novel, the trauma of colonization is a wound in the course of healing since it has a place in the country's collective memory. Ludo too remembers her sins and, as the young Angolan boy who saves her teaches us, her memory calms the dead. "A minha mãe dizia que os mortos sofrem de amnesia. Sofrem mais ainda com a pouca memória dos vivos. Você se lembra dele [o jovem morto por Ludo] todos os dias, e isso é bom. Deveria se lembrar dele rindo, dançando. . . . Conversar sossega os mortos."⁵⁹ (161). The clear contrast that Jeremias' and Ludo's acts of memory establish in the way with in the traumatic events of the country's most recent past are treated indicates that, while one tries to reconcile the colonial past through memory, the same does not hold true when it comes to the wrongdoings of the post-independence regime. In such a conjunction, the oblivion theorized in the story is the cement keeping that society from moving towards a complete postcolonial conciliation, able to place the complexity of colonial and post-independence history into collective memory. It is a situation that allocates the systems' victims – both the dead and living – into the margins of memory, on the threshold of oblivion, the only place from which these societies' subalterns, such as Sérgio from *Marginais* can speak.

The narrative of Sérgio, whose subtitle is *Apontamentos de um Vagabundo*, or Notes of a Vagabond, is a testimony of the life of those who

⁵⁹ "My mum used to say that the dead suffer from amnesia. They suffer even more because of the poor memories of the living. You remember him every day, and that's good. You should laugh as you remember him, you should dance. . . . Talking calms the dead." (Hahn 165)

are successfully forgotten. Furthering the narrative strategies we have seen in *Tiara*, *Aurélia* and *Teoria*, where we find a growing focus on the excluded, as a novel *Marginais* purposefully does not include any major elaboration of characters who are part of the privileged classes. Those, when represented, come in the heavily typified colors of stock characters, establishing an interesting contrast with the different levels of elaboration and depth ascribed to the characters of the lower strata of the represented society. Invested with a strength that is deeply connected with the strategy to feature solely those who are excluded from political and economic power, the novel reminds us that invisibility is directly linked to memory. For this reason, Sérgio is compelled to remember and to register in posterity not only his own story, but also those of friends and neighbors whose lives were just like his, a theatre of horrors and precarity (Rocha 62). Oblivious to the country's collective memory, these characters' only weapon against the invisibility that exposes them to all sorts of abuse is to remember. As the narrator puts it when he gives his manuscript to the editor who, in the story, decides to publish it after its author's suicide, to remember was the only way to keep living: “[n]estas páginas consegui afogar muita mágoa e se não morri antes foi por estar com a mente ocupada nestas anotações.”⁶⁰ (13).

It is through the material registration of their existence that Sérgio and his friends, the Pitboys Gang, make themselves visible in the public

⁶⁰“in these pages I’ve deposited my sadness and if I did not day before it is because I was busy with these notes”

space and for the elites. It is striking to notice how much effort these characters put into voicing their existence, transforming their very insistence in not giving up into resistance. In this context, graffiti and vandalism are the means through which the boys make themselves uncomfortably visible as they force the anger and the dissent of the excluded in public and private spaces.

. . . imprimíamos nas paredes verdadeiras obras de arte depois de defecarmos. A habilidade dos dedos das mãos tomavam contornos de um pênis majestoso, a boca de um canto de *rap* se confundia com o sexo ameaçador da mulher; disposto à engolir o mundo a sua volta. O grafismo na parede parecia ter vida. Pichávamos as paredes dos homens grandes, dos coronéis e as impressões ficavam lá, pois ninguém podia mandar-nos ficar calados. Já não era necessário roer as unhas ou coçar a cabeça para aliviar a emoção glandular. Se estivesse deprimido, dava uma *cacada* de pedra à montra da loja e fugia. Há melhor terapia do que quebrar os vidros de uma montra num país onde os filhos dos pobres são excluídos e a discriminação é estimulada? . . . As paredes das casas foram feitas para que pudéssemos desabafar a dor que nos atormentava a alma;⁶¹ (39-40)

⁶¹ we made real works of art after defecating. The hability with the fingers would give countours to a majestic penis. To the mouth of a rap singer that would mingle with

Besides clearly staging aspects of local class struggle “in an urban environment increasingly defined by the segregation and control of social space” (Ferrell 78), the description of the role given to graffiti and vandalism in this quote goes beyond the reclamation of public space for those systematically excluded from it, which frames much of the understanding of these phenomena by scholarship. This quote also sums up the role ascribed to memory in the novel since, as deployed by the Pitboys, graffiti and vandalism are no more acts of reclamation of space than vehicles for their voices, which are violently imposed by them to the same extent to which they are violently silenced by society. As becomes evident, the process of inscription that these manifestations represent turns the boys’ tools of oppression into weapons of resistance. Hence, the scatology forced upon the protagonist and his equals on a daily basis is thrown back at the so-called respectable members of the local bourgeoisie, a process in which feces are transformed into paint and explicit portrayals of genitalia are deemed appropriate for public display. The calming effects of such a type of expression as described in the quote also reiterate the protagonist’s aforementioned view of his memoir in the beginning of the story, and reveal the psychologically disturbing effects of their voicelessness. In this context, as expressed by the use of words such as “relieve”, “therapy” and “vent”,

threatening sex of a woman, ready to swallow everything around it. The drawing on the wall seemed alive. We vandalized the walls of big men, colonels, and our impressions would remain there because nobody could make us shut up. It was no longer necessary to bit our fingernails or to stretch our heads to alleviate our tension. If I was depressed, I threw a stone at a shop window and ran away. Is there anything better than to break the windows of a shop in a country where poor kids are excluded and discrimination encouraged? . . . the wall of the houses were made for us to alleviate the torments of our souls;

vandalism becomes a form of social catharsis; a temporary relief needed for the excluded to go on existing in the shadows. Despite the privilege given to the disruptiveness of these acts of vandalization that is detrimental to its content, we cannot ignore the fact that these manifestations constitute important acts of memory. Echoing Rothberg who starts his book *Multidirectional Memory* with the premise that “memory is the past made present” (3), the whole narrative along with its many instances of expression of the socially excluded constitutes an act of presentification of their stories into a collective history of their society.

Consequently, we can see that the three narratives analyzed in this section – *Tiara*, *Teoria* and *Marginais* – offer views of collective memory that, despite their contrast with the perspectives of *Campo* and *Aurélia*, establish a relation of complementarity with the aforementioned two narratives. The comparison between these five novels offers a mosaic panorama of representation of memory in the 21st Century narratives of Portuguese-speaking Africa. It shows that these literatures’ critical engagement with national canonical history has resulted in the development of new ways to represent memory. The clear distancing of the point of view of the local bourgeoisies, represented only insofar as it constitutes objects of critical scrutiny, indicates that in the face of the settlement of political independence the critical impetus of these literatures now turned to the established postcolonial regimes. This movement, rather than attesting to any apparent change of sides in literature, actually testifies to its

permanence in contributing to social development by going against the grain. The same way that the independences were themselves achieved through complex sets of processes of legitimization of the nationalist claim led by the local elites, who were strongly supported by the literature of the period around the time of the anticolonial struggles, in contemporary postcoloniality, it is the newly established status quo that constitutes the constant object of critique. In so being, in its engagement with a colonial memory that saw Africa as *locus horrendous*, literature works towards the construction of local memories based on the valuation of local cultures as well as political and economic claims. At a time in which the nationalist bourgeoisie manipulates history to glorify its own cause and perpetuates the continuation of its members in power, literature gives voice to the narratives of those who question the single-sided national remembrance that leaves aside the (hi)stories of violence, dissent and inequality that constitute the complex fabric of postcoloniality.

Put alongside each other, we see that these novels' critique of almost institutionalized manipulation of national memory denounces the disembodiment of the nation within the frame of nationalism as a communicable experience, denoting its transit from *milieu de mémoire* to *lieu de mémoire* of which we spoke in the first part of this subchapter. Complementarily, these novels also contest mainstream versions of national memory by actively voicing the memories of those who, despite also working for the autonomy and growth of their respective countries, had the

courage to disagree with the local ruling classes and became victims of political isolation, repressive violence and social and economic exclusion. In their critical relationship with canonical versions of national memory, these novels embark on violent struggle over memory as they recount history from the perspective of those underrepresented, using these archival testimonies to desacralize the aura and the canonicity of nationalistic movements and independent governments who did not succeed without contradictory constitutional problems. In this sense, while *Campo* and *Aurélia* question the fabricated nature of collective memories backed by institutional needs such as the State's, *Tiara* heavily critiques the nationalist bourgeoisie, *Teoria* de-romanticizes the years of socialist experiment and *Marginais* denounces the failures of the current neoliberal projects put in place in the aftermath of socialism. Furthermore, very much present in the ways in which memory is thematized, we have the prevalence of violence underpinning the memory battles at stake. In *Campo*, the manipulation of memory is supported by the violence of a State apparatus in the form of a prison system. In *Aurélia*, the violence is social to the extent that it ostracizes those who do not agree with official versions, as it does with Pedro Santos, whose opinion on the history of the country is not taken seriously. *Tiara*'s defeated protagonist is clearly a victim of a political system that violently excludes dissidents. *Teoria* directly links acts of remembrance to resistance and acts of oblivion to oppression. And finally, in *Marginais*, we have social invisibility as a mode of systemic violence.

They are all depictions that, by focusing on the dissident content of these gender, race, class and socially-situated archives of memory, seem to push for the transformation of what can be perceived as current models of competitive memory into a complex whole of multidirectional memory.

Conceived by Michael Rothberg, multidirectional memory accounts for a way to conceptualize memory that “considers a series of interventions through which social actors bring multiple traumatic pasts into an heterogeneous and changing post-World War II present” (*Multidirectional Memory* 4). Although Rothberg’s theorization is deeply grounded on the study of remembrances of the Holocaust, the concept is very transferrable to the countries of contemporary postcolonial Portuguese-speaking Africa. If in his study Rothberg uses the concept to support his hypothesis that Holocaust memories do not necessarily obliterate other kinds of human suffering and actually articulate with the remembrance of other genocides, here the proposition is useful to remind us that these novels’ narratives of postcolonial distress do not go against the nationalist project, but, on the contrary, enrich it. By denouncing the problems and contradictions faced by each respective society in the aftermath of independence, these narratives, to paraphrase Rothberg, consider a series of interventions through which social actors bring multiple traumatic pasts into a heterogeneous and changing *postcolonial* present. It is a project that, much in line with the literary traditions of the countries in question, is inclusive in nature and fundamentally necessary for an everlasting critical movement that is, in

itself, for the sovereign nation, even when it is critical of the contemporary State.

3.4 Conclusion: postcolonial violence – from physical to symbolic

Bruce Lawrence and Aisha Karim, in the introduction of their recently edited volume *On Violence*, affirm that “[t]here is no general theory of violence apart from its practices” (7). For this reason, in the opening of this chapter, we resorted to the thought of revolutionary intellectuals such as Fanon and Cabral in order to understand what seems to be an intrinsic relationship between violence and postcoloniality. As has been mentioned earlier in this study, the violence that permeates the postcolonial works of the African literatures written in Portuguese cannot be dissociated from its revolutionary practices, nor can it be disconnected from the single-party socialist and democratic neoliberal practices that deeply transformed their postcolonialities.

In the course of this chapter, we have seen how three different types of violence are represented in our literary corpus. Emerging as a result of empirical comparison rather than of any a priori thematic choice, the isolation of the specific themes of state violence, gender violence and memory violence show interesting relations between modes of violence and

political practices. As the novels analyzed show, literary representations of violence in Portuguese-speaking Africa seem to gradually change the focus from physical to symbolic violence as postcoloniality develops and non-democratic forms of government lose their strength. The further from non-democratic forms of government these societies are, the more prominence is given to the symbolic, rather than physical, dimensions of violence found in the literary representations studied. As a result, in the following pages, we will take a closer look at how this transition in terms of mode of violence is presented in our corpus and we will assess whether they work as indicators of new articulations of violence that are inherent to their contemporary postcoloniality.

Symbolic violence is defined by Bourdieu and Wacquant as “the violence of which one is both the subject and the object” (166). It is a violence in which “social agents are knowing agents who, even when they are subjected to determinisms, contribute to producing the efficacy of that which determines them insofar as they structure what determines them” (167-168); it is, therefore, a form of violence that is not necessarily physical but which can be so. As Bourdieu once acknowledged, “even when based on naked force, that of arms or money, [violence] always has a symbolic dimension” (172). In relation to our corpus, Bourdieu’s terminology can be useful for it allows us to identify forms of violence that are more subtle and less pronounced than explicit representations of physical abuse. As a result, it enables us to notice a *longue durée* of violence contradicting our

perception of physical violence, which is often seen as an episodic occurrence. Physical violence is not typically understood as a systemic mode of violence, since to the extent to which its continuous performance entails the risk of death, the act eliminates the individual and with it the possibility of its continuous existence as practice. For this reason, studies dedicated to the literary representations of violence in the field of the literatures of Portuguese-speaking Africa tend to see it as circumscribed to singular events of limited – even if long – duration such as the struggle for independence, civil wars, or political persecution put in motion by a given regime.

When it comes to our corpus, we observe that the representations of physical and symbolic violence follow a consistent path. As we saw in *Campo de Trânsito*, *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento* and *Marginais*, explicit physical violence is symbolically laden and perpetrated almost exclusively by the coercive apparatus of a strong, authoritarian State or in reaction to it. The very setting of a camp administered by State representatives in *Campo* is illustrative of it. Physical violence in the story comes either in the form of arrests, isolation, forced labor and rape perpetrated by the State through its agents, or in the form of a revolt by the inmates that goes against the State at the end of the narrative. In the case of *Teoria*, the concentration of physical violence rests in the hands of the State, agent Monte, who becomes gradually more hesitant in fulfilling his duties as the political regime opens up politically and economically. As it happens, the character fully abandons

his functions after the end of the civil war in his country. Even in *Marginais*, where we have a narrative chronologically set long after independence, we can see that the police are harder in the first part of the narrative, when the protagonist and his friends are in their early teenage years. Using the year of birth of the protagonist (1977) to calculate the approximate year of his arrest and sexual abuse by a the local police force – which happened a little before he claimed to be sixteen years old – we are left at approximately 1992, a year that definitely marks the democratic turn of the country as a new constitution ratifies the adoption of multiparty democracy. Therefore, as the observation of these physically violent episodes shows, and despite being connected to modes of symbolic violence that remain, the representation of physical abuse is episodic and usually connected to a political or social situation limited in time.

While such representations of violence in *Campo de Trânsito* which, due to its crafted cohesion between form and content, presents a narrative that – just like its inmates – are confined almost in their entirety to the space of suspended time in the camp, all the other four novels cover a reasonable amount of time. The Guinean narrative runs for an indefinite twenty four years between the struggle for independence and the consolidation of political sovereignty of its fictional African country. The Cape Verdean novel lasts as long as its protagonist, from 1977 to 1999. Although the time span of the Santomean narrative is never revealed, its relatively short time span of a couple of years is often stretched by narrations of past events

which are of relevance to the story. Providing the narratives with a perfect canvas onto which the long processes of change in their society can be painted, these long time spans are essential for showing the transit in focus from physical to symbolic violence.

In *Tiara*, the presence of physical violence is circumscribed to the part of the narrative in which the struggle for independence is portrayed. Combined with it, and gradually taking more prominence in the oppression of the protagonist of the novel, we have instances of symbolic violence as discussed in the previous sections of this chapter. They are instances of violence of which she is both object and subject, given that she is both victim of and complicit with that kind of violence until the time when she decides to part from it, physically removing herself from the country's politically oppressive scene. Similarly, although practiced on a larger scale given the scope of the narrative, *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento* stages a change in terms of predominance in modes of violence from the physical to the symbolic. As the analysis of the novel's representation of gender relations has shown, in the beginning of the story both modes of violence are very much intertwined. While the death of Jeremias Carrasco opens the novel with a single scene mashing together revolutionary violence and gender violence, it ends with a notable absence of physical violence, whose apex is in the metaphorical nature of Monte's assassination.

Marginais and *Aurélia de Vento*, however, despite following the same trend as the two novels previously addressed, show more complex

situations. Even though the presence of physical violence does not disappear completely from the Cape Verdean novel, after the police rape episode we note a change in the way this mode of violence is represented. Physical abuse is no longer portrayed as a prerogative of the State coercive apparatus, but rather as a widespread practice throughout civil society. Along with it, the emphasis on the pervasiveness of symbolic violence in that society is increased as it comes to constitute the most extensive mode of violence deployed in the rest of the narrative. Finally, the post-independence and seemingly democratic environment of *Aurélia* simply does not depict instances of physical violence, with the exception of the disruptive attack against the protagonist ordered by her stepmother. Nonetheless, the whole narrative is permeated by symbolic forms of violence perpetrated mostly against Aurélia and her father – a woman and a foreigner.

Put alongside each other, the novels constituting this fictional corpus point towards a consistent trend when it comes to the representation of violence in the Portuguese-speaking African postcolony. The novels which explicitly portray or suggest a setting similar to the early days of sovereignty of their respective postcolonies such as *Tiara*, *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento* and *Campo de Trânsito*, tend to emphasize a predominance of physical over symbolic violence that is often concentrated in the hands of the State. The narratives whose internal time span is long enough to reach the last decade of the twentieth century, such as *Teoria*, tend to change their focus from State-inflicted physical violence to the permanence of symbolic

violence. Lastly, the narratives completely set in the aftermath of independence such as *Aurélia de Vento* and *Marginais* tend to give more space to the representation of symbolic violence tempered with physical violence that emerges from members of civil society and not from the State.

Seen from this perspective, these narratives signal a tangible relationship between development in the representation of violence of the early 21st Century literatures of Portuguese-speaking Africa and its political formulations. The revolutionary violence needed to push their countries out of colonialism was the main resource deployed by the newly stated independent single-party States in order to secure the revolution. With time and the maturation of democratic structures, State violence dims and literature seems to turn its critical eye to the lingering of the symbolic forms of violence which maintain problematic social structures of internal domination. For this reason, issues such as discourse actualization, performance, ideological apparatus and power, treated in Chapter 2 of this study, are ever-present in their representations of State. If we follow Keith Topper's view of the relevance of Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, we will see how important it is as a mechanism "for investigating vexing problems of democratic theory and practice, and particularly for combating perversions of those political values inextricably linked to democratic forms of life: freedom, equality, and social justice" (31). For, through what we have seen in this chapter, the change from physical to symbolic violence that accompanies the abandonment of more totalitarian forms of government

and the development of democratic forms of political organization does not eradicate the practices of domination that were fiercely opposed by the nationalist revolutionary movements in the 1960's and 1970's. The truculence of the State – be it physically violent as seen in *Teoria* or legally enacted as we see in *Aurélia* –, the oppression of gender, the maintenance of a hierarchy of gender roles, and the suppression of memories can only maintain a dynamics of domination that is at odds with democratic premises. In the past, these dynamics were in place to sustain colonial capitalism, and then to keep the integrity of single-party socialism; but today, they are certainly deployed to maintain the predatory practices of democratic neoliberalism.

Chapter 4

The Matter of Wealth

[T]he political issue of our times is not whether there will be a transition from historical capitalism to something else. That is as certain as we can be about such things. The political issue of our times is whether this something else, the outcome of the transition, will be morally fundamentally different from what we have now, will be progress.

Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism with Capitalist Civilization*

Seen from the World-Systems perspective, the history of modern Portuguese-speaking Africa is one embedded in the expansion of European capitalism into a world-system. According to Wallerstein, to the extent in which their role was mainly to provide slave manpower for plantation colonies elsewhere, African territories were an essential external force in the arena of the capitalist world-economy. However, with the Industrial Revolution (1750) and the stabilization of British hegemony in Europe after the defeat of France in the Napoleonic Wars (1815) came the need to expand the consumer markets, which allowed the incorporation of modern African territories to the peripheries of the world-system as colonies (“Africa in a capitalist world” 61-62). Although, when it comes to the

specificity of the Portuguese territorial possessions in Africa Wallerstein's general model requires some adaptations, it is still valid as a means to understand the basis of wealth distribution and generation in a large portion of the continent. The main differences are that, in our case, what drove Portugal towards its African colonies was rather the loss of Brazil (1822) than its industrial advancement or hegemony in the world-system. Yet, even though the process of incorporation of the Portuguese African territories as its peripheries came much later (1951 [Alexandre 963]) if compared to its British counterpart, the premise under which the countries that constitute Portuguese-speaking Africa came to be is the same: economic inequality.

To think of the presence of inequality in the various political and economic formations of the five Portuguese-speaking African countries is essential if one is willing to see its contemporary literature in a *longue durée*, as is the case here. Understood as a system "based on a division of labor between its core, its semiperiphery, and its periphery in such a way that there is unequal exchange between the sectors but dependence of all the sectors, both economically and politically, on the continuance of this unequal exchange" (Wallerstein "Africa in a Capitalist World" 56), capitalist world-economy is an economic system which thrives in an inequality that is, first and foremost, material. For the purpose of the present study, such a perspective restores the material dimension of terms such as colony, single-party State and multiparty democracy that have only recently been re-materialized in the literary critique of the field. After a relatively

long hiatus since the emergence of an anti-colonial literature that gave aesthetic form to the political organization of the colony with its material counterpart, colonialism, scholars slowly turned themselves to the reverberations of economic and social conditions in literary aesthetics¹ in the aftermath of independence. Consequently, terms such as single-party State and multiparty democracy cannot be dissociated from their counterparts socialism and neoliberalism, as these specific modes of creation and distribution of wealth shape not only expressions of subjectivity, but also the form of these literatures.

The enormous inequality in terms of wealth generation and distribution in the Portuguese colonial system was one of the main reasons the revolutionary nationalist parties of the Portuguese colonies in Africa decided to opt for socialism. As Cabral puts it, “quer no plano económico, quer nos planos social e cultural, o capital imperialista ficou longe de cumprir nos nossos países a missão histórica desempenhada pelo capital nos países de acumulação”² (“A arma” 185); or as Walter Rodney wittingly left to posterity “[t]he Portuguese stand out because they boasted the most and did the least” (206). The level of abandonment of the colonies was alarming and in a text of 1960 titled “The facts about Portugal’s African colonies”, Cabral summarizes the situation. In Angola and Mozambique, the most

¹ See: Phillip Rothwell’s *A Postmodern Nationalist* (2004), Fernando Arenas’ *Lusophone: Africa Beyond Independence* (2011) and Ana Margarida Dias Martins’ *Magic Stones and Flying Snakes* (2012).

² “whether on the economic level, or on the social and cultural levels, imperialist capital has been a long way from fulfilling in our countries the historical mission carried out by capital in the countries of accumulation”. (Wolfers 127)

fertile areas of land were taken from Africans and distributed between colonial companies and settlers. In Guinea-Bissau, where the number of settlers was small and the whole of the agricultural work was done by Africans, farmers had to face selling prices that were driven down by authorities and further lowered by colonial buyers. The vast majority of wealth produced in the colonies by colonial companies would be sent to the metropole and not reinvested locally. Protectionist laws obliged Africans to buy excessively expensive industrialized products from Portugal while having to pay high taxes. Forced labor was a practice in the colonial farms of São Tomé and in the public sector of Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique. Workers facing mortality rates as high as 30% were rented out for other in-land activities and exported to work in the mines of South Africa and Rhodesia. In addition, there were few doctors, illiteracy levels were 99% and Africans that were not assimilated (assimilation rate was 0.3%) had no political rights (17-25).

The situation for Portugal, on the other hand was not bad. Despite the argument of a Portuguese colonial exceptionalism based on its de-facto influence and a presumed semiperipheral position *vis-à-vis* the British Empire – defended by scholars as respected as Boaventura de Sousa Santos (“Between Prospero and Caliban”) –, we agree with Morier-Genoud and Cahen who categorically state that “[e]ssentially, the Portuguese Empire was not different from other empires. . . . [Its difference with other European empires] is a difference of degree, not of nature” (7). “[D]riven

by the same global factors driving [other European] capitalist economic expansion – a search for new markets and primary resources” (3), Portugal got what it wanted. As the well-documented study of Pedro Lains titled “Causas do colonialismo português em África, 1822-1975” proposes, the income achieved by Portugal through the exploitation of its African colonies was absolutely essential for the growth and development of the country in the period comprehended by his study³. The deal seemed to be so good for Portugal that, even computing the losses accrued from the early 1970’s due to the advancement of the colonial wars, it is possible for Lains to say that “[é] plausível que a contribuição das colónias de África para o financiamento da balança de transacções correntes [da metropole] tenha sido mais importante do que os eventuais efeitos negativos do ‘sistema colonial’”⁴ (492) for the structure of Portuguese economy.

Once the gains of Portugal were achieved via the strong exploitation of the African populations supervised by white colonial settlers and governors, little was left after the Portuguese left Africa, in the immediate post-independence period. The lack of knowledge transfer that was so characteristic of the Portuguese colonial enterprise left a legacy of underdevelopment that was a real barrier for the recently-formed governments to overcome (Birmingham 150; Forrest 239-240; Newitt 203;

³ “Causes of Portuguese colonialism in Africa, 1822-1975”

⁴ “[it is] plausible that the contribution of the African colonies financing the balance of the current account [of the metropole] has been more important than the eventual negative effects of the ‘colonial system’”

Malaquias 34). As we have seen in Chapter 3, the experience of “people’s war” was not enough to either engage all populations with the socialist ideology nor significantly to unite the peoples on the three fronts where it took place. As a consequence, the hurried departure of Portuguese personnel after independence left the countries unable to operate whatever modes of wealth generation that were set in place during colonialism. In addition to this shared situation, all five countries that became independent from Portuguese rule in Africa had to face the doubly difficult challenge of planning for the future while being virtually unable to provide enough for their present. Such a situation entailed a material precariousness that further complicated the possibilities of success of the newly established socialist regimes that would last from the mid-1970’s through to the early-1990’s. People’s instinct of survival was to put ideological commitments to test.

Wealth in the socialist years

Commentators show that the immediate wealth distribution in post-independence Portuguese-speaking Africa did not change greatly when compared to colonial times, leaving room for a pragmatics of subsistence that stretched some colonial structures of inequality. As expected, the situation was diverse in each of the five countries. In Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, the three fronts where the struggle for independence was fought and colonial presence was visible – although minimal in Guinea-

Bissau if compared to what happened in Angola and Mozambique – cultural, ethnic, ideological and regional divides depleted their development in different ways.

In Angola, the departure of the settlers gave way to the widening of internal divisions that the MPLA could not avoid. First and foremost these divisions led the country to its 27-year-long civil war, which reflected a deep ideological divide – the Marxist-Leninist MPLA vs. the Liberal UNITA – that for some scholars such as Assis Malaquias (65) also represented an ethnic dispute. In the beating-heart of the country's capital, Luanda, the racial and economic fronts saw a clash for power in the State apparatus between prestigious old *creole* black elites, relatively educated black colonial *assimilados* (assimilated), and the growing number of brown *mestiços* (mestizos) who thought themselves racially better than their black countrymen (Birmingham 148-149). Additionally, draining the country of resources and impairing the development of basic infrastructures essential for interlinking the various parts of the country, regional divides became bigger and were intersected by the dichotomy of urban vs. rural. Such intersecting divides clearly influenced the way in which socialism failed to serve the common wealth.

The lack of socialist consciousness was among the main reasons why Angolan socialism ended up becoming a machine for personal enrichment. Added to all the divides fracturing the social construct of the country, the absence of a socialist education for the masses engendered the general

mismanagement of the *res publica* (Bhagavan 23), and with it the need of further concentration of power in the hands of a central government always under threat. Within such a climate, the State-party lived under the paranoia of betrayal which resulted in an incredible wave of violence and hardening of the regime – referred to in Chapter 3. Therefore, concentration of power and access to wealth in the hands of those faithful to the party was the course taken by the State during its socialist period.

In the case of Mozambique, the party-State commitment with the Marxist-Leninist doctrine did not interact easily with the traditional forms of organization present in extensive parts of the country that were left unchanged by colonial power. As is widely known, colonial settlements and activities were basically concentrated on the coastal cities and, in order to manage the interior, colonial administration would empower local chiefs, leaving their laws and customs in place as long as they would not rise against colonial power. The fissures within the country – more exactly between regions, ethnicities and ideological orientations – led to a civil war that was primarily a war of destabilization of the ruling party by destruction of the country's already meagre infrastructure (Newitt 210-211). As a consequence, concentration of wealth in the hands of members of the party-State, despite being less expressive than in Angola, had as its motif the threat of the war and the ideological nature of a political elite that shared little with the majority of the population that was not as well educated and

convinced by the Marxist-Leninist secularism (Cahen “Check on Socialism in Mozambique” 51).

The situation of Guinea-Bissau shared two main characteristics with the case of Angola and Mozambique but, as it could not be different, not without a number of specificities. Inheritance of the colonial social order was even more of a burden to the recently formed government, since the country was so sparsely colonized and the local structures remained in the hands of the *de facto* indigenous power (Forrest 237). This situation led to the problem of a very underdeveloped State infrastructure which, on the one hand, would not contribute to effective central planning of resources and investment and, on the other hand, would benefit the rise of a politics of “personalism” that marked the division of wealth and political power in the country. A series of bad infrastructural investments pushed the country into starting its wave of privatization as early as 1984, and by 1987 it was already borrowing money from the IMF (Forrest 240-241). The Guinean commitment to socialism can be matched with the other two small economies of this group of five: São Tomé and Príncipe and Cape Verde.

Although the trajectories of these two economies have little in common with the case of the massive Angola and Mozambique, they share with them some of the colonial problems that determined the (non)success of their implementation of socialism. As both territories had a very small presence of white settlers – Cape Verde even less than São Tomé and Príncipe –, both countries had very little infrastructure. São Tomé and

Príncipe, a country which did not know yet of its oil reserves and its economy and was extremely reliant on their culture of cocoa, was underdeveloped and badly managed after independence. The *forro* elite, who seized the place of the white settlers in the country's internal pyramid, knew very little of the plantation work that was usually delegated to contracted workers who were kept away from administrative posts. Moreover, the clientelist culture turned the public section into an inefficient machine plagued by nepotism and misuse, further damaging the already scarce resources of the country. In this conjuncture, nationalization worked as a legal way to set the country's assets definitely in the hands of the local elite and inequality became the social rule (Seibert "São Tomé and Príncipe" 300-301).

In terms of Cape Verde, the complete neglect of colonial administration threatened the population's well-being to the extent that the newly installed government, despite its initial commitment to socialism, was obliged to practice more pragmatic economic choices in line with their own domestic needs and possibilities. The mineral-poor and drought-prone archipelago-state of Cape Verde did not encounter big problems in terms of ethnic or ideological divide given its largely *mestiço* population. If anything, the country was united to fight a problem more fundamental than colonialism: the widespread state of hunger. The absence of substantial colonial investment amplified the catastrophic results of the systematic lack of rain of which the country is victim, pushing its government to rely on

international aid to be able to feed its population. For this reason, the government's approach was "sustainable human development rather than socialism" (Silva Andrade 268). On the other hand, as the scarcity of data relating to wealth inequality in the first political and economic period of independent Cape Verde seems to indicate, it was the excessive concentration of wealth that aggravated the country's poverty during the years of single-party socialism.

Wealth in the times of neoliberal economy

With the fall of the Soviet Union, the most fragile economies of the Portuguese-speaking African countries were the first ones to open up politically and economically. São Tomé and Príncipe and Cape Verde were so dependent on foreign aid – and the conditions it imposed – that, regardless of the ideological commitment with the end of exploitation of men by men, both started the transition to a nominal market economy (1988 and 1987, respectively [Silva Andrade 260; Seibert 302]), embracing multiparty democracy soon after. Although the injection of capital of the free market economy substantially improved the lives of the actual population of both countries, wealth inequality has grown. Plagued by kinship and clientelism that remained after the economic transition, the administratively-inept government of São Tomé and Príncipe is often described as a corrupt machine that, besides failing in developing the country, devours the potential gains of its newfound oil reserves (Conti-

Brown 2010). Cape Verde's political and economic opening too seems to have been more profitable for overseas investor groups, as the large gains of the tourism industry are remitted offshore, and cheap imported commodities threaten the fragile informal economy based on diasporic remittances that sustain much of its population (Fikes 2010). Despite now being able to at least feed its population in cases of emergency, the neoliberalization of the Cape Verdean economy seems to have brought with it a wealth inequality unseen during the socialist period (Sangreman Proença 39). Similarly devoid of any economic infrastructure, a situation aggravated by its flagrant political instability, Guinea-Bissau – which embarked on the IMF's Structural Adjustment Programs of neoliberalization in 1987 (Forrest 241) – not only lives from international aid, but has become an important point in the international drug trafficking route. The country is now seen as a distribution hub for the cocaine in transit from its manufacturing sites in South America towards its consumer markets in Europe (McGuinn "Understated yet turbulent").

By looking at these three cases, we see that while the journey into neoliberalism allowed the countries to manage some of the infrastructural problems inherited from an utterly exploitative form of colonialism, it has either created or aggravated internal problems in the field of wealth inequality. The withdrawal of the state from the role as promoter of economic and social development, at a time in which it had not even fulfilled its role sufficiently by providing a reasonable infrastructure to its

poeples, seems to have left these countries' populations at the mercy of predatory rules of international capitalism. While some disillusioned critique of these postcolonial single-party regimes would ironically suggest that independence only afforded the chance to replace a set of foreign exploiters by indigenous ones, the same kind of logic nowadays would endorse the remark that the transition to neoliberalism has now replaced indigenous exploiters by faceless international ones.

The necessarily diverse pathways taken by Angola and Mozambique in their transition from socialism to neoliberalism do not necessarily mean that they led to less problematic outcomes. One should be careful not to diminish the impact of the destabilization wars in these countries' State initiatives. Among their disastrous effects were the undermining of existing infrastructure along with the inhibition of the development of new one, and draining of a vast array of valuable resources, mainly manpower by cutting short millions of lives while leaving other hundreds of thousands displaced and handicapped in misery (Cammack). The case of Mozambique shows how the debilitation caused by this type of war shaped the problems that marked the transition of the country into capitalism. As Newitt has put it, "[t]he changes in economic policy had been planned long before the peace process began. It is perhaps more helpful to see the peace process as arising out of the change in political and economic direction rather than the shift in economic direction coming as a result of peace" (227).

Peace in Mozambique had much to do with the dismantling of the Soviet Union and the gradual lack of financial support to the ruling party Frelimo. This international conjuncture forced Frelimo to confer certain legitimacy to RENAMO, once the rebels agreed to discuss peace on the condition of changing the single-party politics model into a multiparty one in which RENAMO could participate. Heavily mediated by the UN and the Vatican, the Mozambican peace came wrapped up in Western financial aid under the condition of a quick neoliberalization of the country's economy, which kept Mozambique further away from the possibility to recover and reinvest in its industrial infrastructure. The *quid pro quo* for the much needed financial aid to keep the country's ball rolling was a sweeping wave of privatization and deregulation, which weakened the already fragile local economy, which was unable to compete with foreign investors and the wave of imported manufactured products. Despite the fact that the country's relative success in borrowing and honoring international commitments has put it on the good side of credit institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank, its population still remains largely in poverty.

Caught up in the vicious cycle of foreign aid, external debt and underdevelopment, the country ended up pushing its populations into all forms of economic instability that were, as Pitcher argues, quite good for the consolidation of Frelimo as the ruling party and for the strengthening of the state. "[T]he party has used the privatization process to consolidate its power and to build legitimacy for the state among investors. . . . [T]he ruling

party has redoubled efforts to revive and extend its base and to use the state to provide club goods to supporters and to deliver selective public goods to a larger population” (Pitcher, *Party Politics and Economics* 185). Whereas the opening of the economy in the exchange of foreign aid was a quick fix that delayed the development of the national economy in the long run, it served the state apparatus well. It helped keep the ruling party in power, while providing an environment diplomatically intricate enough to allow the government to restrict political liberties and make use of force when deemed necessary, in the name of the country’s political and economic stability.

Although it is imperative not to forget the huge impact of the civil wars both countries underwent, an account of the current state of affairs in both countries should not evade turning a critical eye to government mismanagement of resources either. Unlike Mozambique which, despite its many obstacles, still managed to build up a good international reputation for its State, Angola is (in)famous for its inequality in wealth distribution, as well as its governmental and administrative corruption. Notwithstanding the enormous hindrances caused by its post-independence war, which happened almost back-to-back with the 13-year long liberation war, after a period of peace that lasting since 2003, it can be argued that even in times of peace the State focused the maintenance of its own apparatus in detriment of public investments.

Recent papers, such as the one by J. García-Rodríguez, F. García-Rodríguez, Castilla-Gutiérrez and Adriano Major, give us important facts.

While Angola's production of oil rocketed over the years, the levels of human development keep below acceptable marks. Nonetheless, a 2003 list with the country's wealthiest men, topped by its president, had a total of seven acting government officials, and, in 2013, *Forbes* named the president's daughter, Isabel dos Santos, as the richest woman in Africa (title kept in 2014 and 2015). Despite all this wealth, the lack of investments in the country's industries – since the main income of the State is the exploitation of its minerals – makes the country's food supply still reliant on imports. This fact, allied with the concentration of wealthy people transiting between government buildings and company headquarters, makes the capital Luanda the most expensive city in the world (from 2010 to date [Mercer, "Cost of living city rankings"]). Luanda, once planned to accommodate five hundred thousand people, today has a population of more than 6 million, of which two-thirds live on less than two dollars a day (Manuel and McClelland 16).

As these numbers add up, we see that the history of wealth in Portuguese-speaking Africa is rather a history of wealth inequality that is pretty much in tune with the capitalist world-system that shaped its actual contours. During our brief detour through these countries' key-aspects in wealth (mis)management over the last 40 years, we have seen that, despite attempts by those committed to independence and equality through another form of wealth creation and management such as socialism, the capitalist form of accumulation – this time in the shape of neoliberalism – slowly

proceeds to deliver its promises of progress at the expense of the exploitation of these country's peoples. Given the impact and the material weight of matters of wealth, it is with little surprise that we observe its growing relevance in the contemporary novels of Portuguese-speaking Africa.

In the analytical sections that follow, we will look at how wealth distribution is represented in our corpus. The comparative analysis of the novels studied has revealed that the portrayal of wealth is closely connected to its mode of concentration, which bears strong resemblances to each of the countries' own post-independence economic trajectories. This allowed for the partition of the analysis into the three main groups according to the predominant form of representation of wealth concentration in each narrative. As a result, this chapter is composed of three analytical and one final, comparative, section.

4.1. The wealth of the State

Had the 18th Century Scottish economist and philosopher Adam Smith read the Mozambican *Campo de Trânsito* and *Guinea Tiara* before writing his *Wealth of Nations*, he would certainly have titled his work *Wealth of States*. Less for how the concept of State wealth would have affected Smith's view of macroeconomics and more for how well these literary conceptualizations of State seem to follow his views, the change of

title would certainly reflect the individualistic ethos behind these novels' representations of State. John Larson reminds us that in "the end, the private individual – Smith's primary actor – facilitates the greater good simply by following his self-centered impulses", as the Scottish economist puts it:

[The individual] intends only his own gain By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good. It is an affectation, indeed, not very common among merchants, and very few words need be employed in dissuading them from it. (qtd. in Larson: 6)

Leaving aside the entertaining thought of Smith's surprise at seeing States doing exactly the opposite of what he would expect them to do, which was acting as intervenors in the market for the sake of their people, the good old logic of chronological time provides a more realistic explanation of the phenomenon. As Smith's five volumes can be seen as the Pentateuch of liberalism, much of its content has been absorbed into the genetics of capitalism which, as we saw earlier in this chapter, is the economic system within which these States came into being. It is probably due to this kind of contact, mediated through colonialism, that some postcolonial African States demonstrate a hunger for wealth that closely resembles that of the self-centered individual proposed by Smith.

Although concentration of wealth by the State is a key element in all five narratives included in this study, the representation of the State as the sole possessor of means in society is found only in *Tiara* and in *Campo de Trânsito*. Even though State concentration of wealth in *Tiara* can be seen as a side issue within a *bildungsroman* much more concerned with the protagonist's journey of maturation, Tiara's story is put in parallel to that of the country around which the story develops. Correspondingly to her journey, we have the maturation trajectory of the fictional Muriti's independence movement, evolving from its early idealism into a corrupt party-State in the country's post-independence period. Consequently, it can be said that together with the coming-of-age of its heroine, Filomena Embaló's narrative offers us glimpses of what can be seen as the sketch of a *bildungsroman* of the State. Understood, in Franco Moretti's terms, as "one of the most harmonious solutions ever offered to a dilemma conterminous with modern bourgeois civilization", the *bildungsroman* is perhaps one of the best forms through which "the conflict between ideal *self-determination* and the imperious demands of *socialization*" (Moretti 15) can be seen at work as one of the root-causes of the voracity with which some States accumulate and concentrate wealth.

To follow the formation of an independent State through a *bildungsroman*, is to emphasize a State's historicity, because of the genre's inherent connection with the concept of youth. The idea that the condensation of the form in 18th Century Western Europe is linked to the

region's modern revolutionary winds of change, which would be materialized by the achievements of its "dual revolution" (Hobsbawm ix), has interesting similarities with the historical conditions surrounding the emergence of the State of Muriti. Like 18th Century Europe, 20th Century Africa too was traversed by modern revolutions of the political and economic order as it got rid of colonialism and many countries were experimenting with socialism. In this convoluted scenario, organizations such as the novel's revolutionary movement, formed and led by the country's young intelligentsia, were also being formed under the modern revolutionary premises "that perceive[d] the experience piled up in tradition as a useless dead-weight, and therefore can no longer feel represented by maturity, and still less by old age" (Moretti 5).

To the extent that the novel offers us elements for a story of the emergence and development of the State of Muriti, it deals quite extensively with its double-tradition of colonial and ancestral origin. The novel shows that in its origins, the liberation movement, that was to give birth to the party responsible for shaping the State, inherited quite a lot from both traditions. On the colonial front, the revolutionaries inherited a country lacking even minimal infrastructure, massive index of analphabetism and segregationist racism. From the ancestral tradition were inherited social norms which, enhanced to survive under the pressures of the colonial regime, reproduced its racism alongside practices of gender hierarchy and violence that became part of treasured aspects of the country's national

identity. As we have seen in our subchapter dealing with gender violence, both Tiara and Kenum fall victim to the country's ancestral traditions, dooming their marriage to fail. Equally, it can be said that it is the inability, first of the liberation movement and later of the party, to abandon key practices of its double-tradition that condemns it to become a self-serving machine.

This argument becomes clearer if we look at the characterization and constitution of the two main antagonists of Tiara, the heroic protagonist embodying values such as justice, moderation, courage and detachment. On the political front, things in the country go from bad to worse. Despite the country's adoption of multiparty democracy five years following independence, it did not really bring the expected democracy. After independence, Kito, the revolutionary who first excluded Tiara on racial grounds upon her arrival at the country, is already deep into the machinery of a State that is heavily controlled by the party stemming from the country's liberation movement. As a result of that, a series of suggestions and allusions throughout the novel suggest that the State became a means for the advancement of the high levels of the political caste rather than a means to pursue the interests of the people. It is interesting to note how the lack of division between party and State, which is characteristic of kleptocratic States, is present in the novel, almost entirely in episodes related to Kito. As time goes by, every instance in which Kito and Tiara's destinies cross is to show how the State has distanced itself from its ideological roots,

become corrupt and, as a result, further rejected the protagonist. After the last battle between these two characters, fought over Tiara's negative advice on a big State contract with a corrupt company, the euphemistic references to corruption finally give way to a conclusive, disillusioned remark: "[Tiara n]ão via futuro no Instituto, nem em nenhuma empresa estatal. Quanto a isso, admitia que tinha perdido a Guerra. Afinal de contas, nunca ninguém venceu o inimigo na sua própria casa..."⁵ (Embaló 234). The first of Tiara's two big defeats in the novel come with her acceptance of disillusionment and of her non-belonging to the country she helped to liberate.

Nonetheless, Tiara's defeat in the public arena is not sufficient to represent the maturation stage of the corrupt State. Together with the colonial inheritance of racial segregation, nepotism and concentration of power, the State also inherits an ancestral intransigence consolidated in opposition to the colonial enterprise. Therefore, on the ancestral front, Kenum's mother, Mãe Zinga (Mother Zinga), embodies the problematic continuation of ancestral structures in the country's society. The character's resolution in not letting her son walk away from his ancestral traditions, entrapping him to get a local, ancestrally acceptable girl pregnant in order to give continuation to the family's ethnic and social lineage, destroys Kenum and Tiara's marriage. The incident clearly brings to the surface the problematic nature of a break with ancestral tradition within members of the

⁵ "[Tiara d]id not see a future for the Institute, or to any other State company. When it comes to this, she admitted that she had lost the war. At the end of the day, no one has ever defeated the enemy under his own roof..."

State apparatus: “Por que teria ele caído na armadilha da mãe? Ele, que decidira tomar em mãos a sua própria vida, fugindo às tradições ancestrais. . . . Seria realmente por respeito à mãe, às tradições familiares, que de toda maneira constituíam os pilares da sua identidade?”⁶ (Embaló 244), Kenum thinks with himself. As a result, with the end of the relationship, Kenum feels unable to continue exercising his much needed role of opposition within the ruling party. By breaking his union with Tiara, Kenum breaks with all she means in the narrative and, accepting the irreconcilable articulation of modernity and tradition, he finally detaches himself from any commitment to a better future for the country. “[Kenum s]entou-se à secretária e redigiu mecanicamente seu pedido de demissão do Instituto. Sem Tiara não teria forças para continuar a lutar. . . . Iria para o Senda, viver com a família como queria a sua mãe. Estaria finalmente em paz com as tradições ancestrais”⁷ (Embaló 245).

If Kenum represented the best public servant the liberation movement had formed – the only one deserving the love of the novel’s heroine–, his withdrawal from public life is a meaningful sign of how things will develop in the country. In fact, as the novel ends with the physical and intellectual separation of all nuclear characters, it clearly indicates that the

⁶ “Why had he fallen in the trap set by his mother? He, who decided to take life on his own hands, escaping ancestral traditions . . . Was it really out of respect for his mother, for the family traditions, that in any case were the pillars of his identity?”

⁷ “[Kenum s]at in front of his desk and mechanically wrote his letter of resignation of the Institute. Without Tiara he lacked the strength to go on with the fight . . . He would go to Senda live with his family as his mother wished. He would finally make peace with the ancestral traditions”

logic of the self-centered individual has prevailed in that society, mirroring the distortions of its State, where one is incapable of conciliating self-determination with socialization. Although the novel tends to describe the State in political terms, it is through its management of public wealth that a verdict on its nature is delivered. Even when the party is able to manage its concentration of power through skillful manipulation of political mechanisms in place, the verdict on its self-centeredness can only come when its fault is verified in the materiality of the economic sphere, through wealth appropriation; an activity shown in much more length and detail by João Paulo Borges Coelho's novel *Campo de Trânsito*.

While in *Tiara* State concentration of wealth is the economic, material and palpable outcome of the State's political constitution for the long run of the country's history, in *Campo de Trânsito*, the timeless focus on the complex of camps offers a much more detailed view on the biopolitical aspects of the actual production and concentration of wealth by a totalitarian State. *Campo*'s allegorical narrative conjugates a powerful discursive practice that collectivizes individuals and individualizes the State, with an anatomy of the predatory productive process through which the State disposes of the individual. The novel's representation of State through its discursive practice has been analyzed in our second chapter dedicated to representations of the State. Consequently, the object of this section is the novel's representation of productive processes of wealth, which is based on inequality and exploitation of its people.

The State in *Campo* is openly suggested as a totalitarian construct, from which no escape is possible. It is, therefore, an unquestionable, inevitable and unavoidable entity that reproduces itself through the reprocessing of individuals, hence the strong ideological component of the camp and the skillful organization of the bodies, minds and prisoners' time into productive forces. Historically speaking, Borges Coelho's conceptualization of State production and amassing of wealth could be inspired by both the colonial and the post-revolutionary Mozambican State. This possibility is granted by the unspecific ways in which this State is described and also by the historical fact that, in Mozambique, massive population displacement aiming at ideological and economic development was a strategy carried out by both colonial and post-independence States.

The colonial project named *aldeamentos* was initiated in the late 1960's as the struggle for independence continued and strategies to fight the revolutionaries in the interior were required. The plan consisted basically in the creation of new villages in strategic locations with the promise to better feed and educate the population under colonial rule, but with the actual intention to concentrate resources and people in strategic areas to contain the advancement of the revolutionary forces (Borges Coelho "Communal villages and protected villages" Ch.6). The post-independence villagization project, known as *aldeias comunais*, worked differently depending on where it happened in the country. While many new farming communities were built, a number of them inherited the mode of organization of the colonial

aldeamentos. Nonetheless, they seem to have been inspired more by the good example of the Ujamaa Villages in Tanzania – a project of voluntary peasants for communal agriculture – and in Frelimo’s own case of communal organization carried on during the war in its liberated areas (Borges Coelho “Communal villages and protected villages” 330-331). Yet, despite the wide range of the program, reaching almost 20% of the population in 1982 (345), the initiative failed both during its destruction by the rebels of RENAMO and by the system’s own shortcomings related to the incompatibility of Frelimo’s Marxist large-scale view of means and objectives with the peasants’ subsistence-driven way of life (436). Additionally, similar to the prison structures developed in the Soviet Union – whose economic dimension proved to be important between 1930’s and 1950’s (Ivanova Ch.2) – post-independence Mozambique also had reeducation camps. These camps, designed uniquely for the punishment and regeneration of the individuals whose activities and morals would not comply with the strict moral code of the party (Thomaz “Escravos sem dono” 187) –, although in part inspired by the communal villages, had the sole purpose of transforming their inmates.

In face of Mozambique’s convoluted history, it is difficult to deny its many points of contact with *Campo de Trânsito*. On the other hand, as much as the novel focuses on the prison camp, the existence and the role of the displaced village – whence the Chief and the fair vendors come – in the narrative enlarges the scope of the story, making it more a representative of

common traits of this kind of resettlement than a faithful reconstruction of any in particular. Moreover, to the extent that, historically speaking, the post-independence resettlement attempts of Mozambique establish clear relations with the colonial ones, it is possible to affirm what the specific contours of Borges Coelho's fictional prison system takes from both the colonial and the post-independence forms of population redistribution. This hypothesis is strengthened due to the author's deliberate avoidance of locating the camps in time and space, concentrating only on the notion of State, common to both forms of political organization thanks to the Portuguese colonial decree of 1951, which changed the status of its then colonies to Overseas Provinces. Therefore, when it comes to production of wealth, the novel offers us a critical picture that problematizes precisely the relationship between State and individual that seems to relate both to the colonial and post-independence production practices on the basis of people's displacement, ideological and cultural reeducation and exploitation. The two first categories listed have been approached from different angles in Chapters 2 and 3 of this study, hence the current analysis will focus on exploitation.

Productivity through alienated work is the material drive behind Borges Coelho's fictional camp complex. The Transit Camp is the place of arrival, loss of subjectivity and learning; the place in which the worker's alienation of the self must be achieved. Although central, work in that camp is experienced in a light, ludic manner, as if to triage which prisoners are

predisposed for the activities of the Old Camp, and which would be better suited for the New Camp. The ultimate function of the camp would thus be the creation of a herd of highly specialized types of alienated workers. The classes of the Teacher on collectivity, the lack of tools with which to find progress and tame nature – “São cerca de uma dezena [de homens], dois ou três com pequenas enxadas, os restantes com paus aguçados que utilizam como se fossem instrumentos de trabalho⁸ (*Campo* 49) –, and the most complete lack of objects with which they have to live upon their arrival in the camp all seem to calculatedly promote the idea of progress through production. The lack of decent food, heat or comfort in which inmates are left, added to the isolation of the place, abundance of natural resources and excess of free time make any individual attempt to improve a prisoner’s comfort into a statement that inspires envy and respect. “[Mungau n]ota que os prisioneiros mais antigos comem com umas toscas colheres de madeira; alguns têm-nas mesmo de alumínio, assim como facas, garfos e outros objectos. . . . São esses os mais bem instalados, comportando-se aqui como se estivessem em sua própria casa”⁹ (45).

Equally, prisoners who do not spontaneously take steps to improve their conditions are noticed, although not yet punished: “Há evidentemente prisioneiros desprovidos do mínimo de sentido construtivo. Não prestam

⁸ “They are around ten [men], two or three with small hoes, the rest of them with sharp sticks that they use as working tools”.

⁹ [Mungau n]otices that the older prisoners eat with rough wooden spoons; some of them even have aluminum ones as well as knives, forks and other objects . . . They are the most well settled ones, behaving here as if they were at home”

atenção ao que se vai inventando, comem com as mãos [Mungau n]ota que os prisioneiros mais miserável são também os mais preguiçosos. Finda a refeição deixam-se ficar entregues a arrastadas digestões”¹⁰(48). Mungau tries to mingle with the agricultural workers, but his intellectual soft-skills and ambition are more suited for the information activities that the Director, wisely, entrusts him with. Through the observation of Mungau’s eagerness in fulfilling his task to visit and produce a report on the other two camps, we see how effective the Transit Camp is in finding each inmate a job that would align with his/her abilities. Such essential activity, carried out at the camp in which the Director – who *is* the State – is resident, is one of the factors that determines the success of the camp as a site of production. Added to that is the delicate balance that the Director has to achieve between State ideology of alienated production and the tradition, which is so dear to the prisoners of the Old Camp and to the Chief of the Village, who acts as the administrator of the Old and the New camps.

The tension between these two traditions echoes a similar problem faced by the State in *Tiara*; however, the approach of each novel privileges a different view of the situation. Located at the political and ideological level, *Tiara*’s focus on society’s superstructure portrays wealth distribution. *Campo*, in its turn, shows us how this tension operates at society’s base, thus concentrating on the portrayal of wealth creation. Therefore, while this

¹⁰ “There are prisoners clearly devoid of any constructive impulse. They do not pay attention at what goes on being developed, eat with their bare hands [Mungau n]otices that the miserable prisoners are also the most miserable ones. After the meal they busy themselves with long digestions”

tension in *Tiara* is exposed in a moderate and intellectualized way, relying on the systemic avoidance of conflict resulting in a quiet acceptance of defeat by the protagonist, in *Campo* the clash between civilization and tradition explodes with the intensity of the violence through which it happens. After the Director secretly arranges the disappearance of the skull of the Original Chief, the archeological artifact that conferred the only symbolic meaning left to the daily lives of prisoners of the Old Camp, the whole system goes off-balance, falls apart and revolution breaks out.

After losing the symbolic object that materially connected their work with the site of the camp and with the rule of the Chief of the Village, the Old Camp's prisoners could no longer keep focused on either their productive or archeologic tasks. While the Director's aim was to destabilize the tradition-oriented rule of the Chief of the Village in order to try to increase the camp's productivity, such a dramatic disruption in the inmate's carefully crafted routine was the pivotal event that awakened their collective consciousness. Following this incident, the inmates from the Old Camp marched to the New Camp – from which they were kept strategically separated: “Não queremos unir o músculo à perspicácia, a força à inteligência. Tonar-se-ia perigoso”¹¹ – to summon the remaining prisoners and march together towards the Transit Camp. As it turned out, the camp

¹¹ “We do not want to join muscle and insight, strength to intelligence. That would be dangerous”

complex could not prescind entirely from the forces of tradition to keep arms and brains entertained and, therefore, separate as the State wanted.

In his allegory of a totalitarian State eager to use its populations to produce wealth, Borges Coelho seems to indicate that a State's biggest mistake is to underestimate its populations' subjectivity and agency. Estranging its peoples' from their most basic and minimal customs and traditions was not only the Director's mistake, but also that of the colonial administration and of the post-independence government. While colonialism's complete disregard and disapproval of local customs was as much a cause to its ends as the system of labor and wealth exploitation it brought, it can be said that the post-independence resettlements failed, in part, due to similar reasons. There was an unwillingness by the party-State to tolerate practices related to ancestral customs disconnected from the premises of Marxism-Leninism, as well as opposition to the peasants' own mode of production, based on familiar subsistence rather than industrial large-scale (Borges Coelho "Communal villages and protected villages" 434-437).

When it comes to the ways in which these two novels approach the theme of wealth we can see that, together, they offer an interesting and supplementary view of wealth which, historically, is connected to the early days of both postcolonial States within which they have been conceived. *Tiara* shows the slow process of condensation of a postcolonial single-party State, from its roots in the liberation struggle through to its establishment in

the post-independence period, which is marked by the concentration of political power and control over public wealth. *Campo de Trânsito*, on the other hand, provides us with a picture of a totalitarian State and the exploitative processes through which this State produces its wealth to the detriment of the well-being of its populations, grouped as prisoners in the exceptional space of the camp. These portraits, therefore, relate to political and economic formations in postcolonial Portuguese-speaking Africa. Notwithstanding the differences inherent to each local specificity, these countries do share a history: their revolutionary nationalism is followed by single-party States with centralized economies characterized by the concentration of wealth around the States, and in the hands of the local elites – revolutionary or not.

4.2. *Wealth in transition*

Establishing a curious continuum with *Tiara* and *Campo de Trânsito*, the Santomean *Aurélia de Vento* and the Angolan *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento* relate to each other in a way that parallels the kind of relationship found between the first two novels, while also advancing into postcolonial times. As we will see, *Aurélia* and *Teoria*, too, establish supplementary relations given that one is more concerned with a portrait of wealth in society's superstructure, and the other seems to dig deeper in society's base. Similarly to what we saw in the previous section, here too we

see one novel covering a long time-span and the another that covers a brief, unspecified interval in time. However, contrary to the previously analyzed pair of novels, the two narratives studied in this section take the cultures within which they emerge as the main setting for their plots, explicitly referring to them. In terms of their relation to history, this set of novels seems to pick up from where the previous two have left off. *Aurélia* offers us a portrait of a society in which the State is reluctantly letting go of its position as the sole possessor of wealth in society, having to negotiate with an emerging and empowered bourgeoisie that is not afraid to point at its failure and shortcomings. *Teoria*, in turn, takes a more historical approach and, addressing just very briefly the revolutionary nationalist movement of Angola, concentrates mostly on the practices of the single-party socialist regime, when wealth is concentrated in the hands of the State, and on the country's transition towards the neoliberal practices of market economy. Having set the comparative frame within which these two narratives will be analyzed, we will keep “following the money” in order to complete the larger picture of wealth drawn by these five narratives of Portuguese-speaking Africa.

Although crucial to the development of its plot, wealth and class in *Aurélia de Vento* are never openly discussed, being diluted as unproblematic components in a social fabric that, despite its many layers, articulates itself with a large degree of harmony with the only exception of the State, personified by one politician: Minister Domingos Ventura. Yet, even though

implicitly, the trail of wealth in the novel does follow what has been proposed by other narratives of our corpus. Wealth is distributed first between settler colonizers, after whose departure wealth is nationalized and redistributed amongst members of the political elite who, after the adoption of a market economy, start to face difficulties in appropriating private resources. This is the main premise of the dispute of Pedro Santos with the State. However, even when this process is not at all strange among the novels of our corpus, in *Aurélia* it is placed against a background of the class system.

Aurélia de Vento is a novel centered on the perspective of an emerging bourgeoisie, portraying its relation with the State and with the country's class of workers. As a result, for an agricultural country like São Tomé and Príncipe that has considerable levels of poverty, all nuclear characters are in very good economic shape. Aurélia is regarded as a “doctor”, reflecting her university degree, and is in a good enough position to allow herself to work in a charity association. Pedro Santos, arguably as central a character as Aurélia, owns productive land. Minister Domingos Ventura is a wealthy politician and Altino Castro an independent and successful layer. However, in spite of these characters' centrality, the lower local class is essential for the development of the story, for it seems to be only in relation to these and against the State that a bourgeoisie emerges in the novel.

As we have observed in previous chapters, *Aurélia* is a narrative entailing two major happenings. The first is Pedro Santos' victory in the lawsuit against the State, which is interested in taking his plot of land at any cost for doubtful purposes. The second is the attempted murder of Aurélia, ordered by her stepmother. In both cases, the general support of the people belonging to the working class legitimized the bourgeois cause for justice: first against the State, and later on against ancient customs. The association between the working class and the bourgeoisie was already indicated in Chapter 2 of this study, where we observed the representation of the State in the novel. While there we pointed to the fact that the State is constituted from a general opposition in the face of those deprived of political power, and that the alliance of the population with the main characters of the novel points towards a constructive future, here we would like to suggest that, viewed from the perspective of wealth distribution, this type of oppositional relation that defines class in the narrative also contains elements capable of engendering its own end. In light of this, it is possible to affirm that while the State can be seen as an institution separated from the idea of nation or people in the novel, this opposition is still further divided into bourgeoisie and working class, whose difference is clearly marked throughout the narrative. The passage below refers to a scene in which Pedro Santos stops quickly at a bar in a poor area to buy cigarettes, respectfully greeting the men present and then leaving:

- Há pessoa, preto ou branco, que respeito parece estar colado nele. É como esse senhor Pedro Santos! Branco que respeita toda a gente, grande ou pequeno, e com bom coração como ele, parece que não há mais!

- Chê, você não vê que ele é branco que ficou aqui não foi p'a terra dele depois de dependência. Pessoa que mesmo 'ntempo de Cívica nunca ninguém incomodou ele...¹²

(Bragança, *Aurélia* 103)

Later on, after hearing of Aurélia's murder attempt, one of the working class men present in the previous scene at the bar is restless and cannot sleep. His wife tries to reason with him:

- Mas Kununo, essa doutora é da tua família? Qué que ela é p'a você, p'a você perder sono dessa maneira? Essa coisa de você ir procurar homem que atacou ela é bem pensada mesmo? Cuidado, nós temos filho p'a criar...!

Kununo nada lhe respondia. Ele sabia que a mulher tinha razão, até porque, ao fim e ao cabo, nada o prendia a Aurélia, gente de outro meio social. Ele sabia-o, mas reconhecia que aquela mulher era especial. Havia nela qualquer coisa que raramente se encontrava nas outras da sua classe, a

¹² - There are those, black or white, whom respect seems to be attached to. It is like this Mr. Pedro Santos! White who respects everyone, big or small, and with such a good heart, seems to exists no more! / - Chê, you don't see that he is white and stayed n'here and didn't go t'his land after independence. Someone whom even 'n times of Cívica nobody has ever bothered him... .

fraternidade que dela irradiava, essa facilidade de relacionamento com as gentes em toda a Trindade e arredores. Para ele não contava apenas o dinheiro e outros bens materiais: a amizade, o respeito, a consideração valiam muito mais do que isso. E aquela mulher comprava-o como ninguém.¹³ (127)

As these passages show, the bond connecting the working class and the bourgeoisie in *Aurélia de Vento* is the notion of mutual recognition and respect regardless of their differences, which happen to be very well marked throughout the texts. The most visible index of these differences is materialized in the register of these characters' speech. While the bourgeois portions of direct speech are written in the educated norm of Portuguese (*norma culta*) – the same as the one used by the narrator –, the speech of characters belonging to the working class shows numerous transpositions of colloquialisms represented in their use of interjections, contractions and syntactic inversions to show the influence of the local creole on their speech, which works as a visible mark of class in the novel. Furthermore, as the narrative uses descriptions of places, habits and customs to add local color to the story, we see, for example, that while Pedro Santos drives to

¹³ - But Kununo, is this doctor family of yours? Who's her fo'you to lose you sleep like this? This thing of you go search for man who attacked her is it thought through? Watch out, we've children t'raise...! / Kununo did not answer back. He knew his wife was right, even because, at the end of the day, nothing connected him to Aurélia, a person from another social environment. He knew it, but he recognized that she was a special woman. She had a certain something that was rarely found in other of her class, she irradiated fraternity, she easily related to the peoples of Trindade and its surroundings. For him money and other possessions were not everything: friendship, respect, consideration were much more valuable. And that woman had him as no one else.

buy cigarettes, the working class men observing him do not own a car, and get their cigarettes from a simple cigarette case, made out of old newspaper (Bragança 104). While Aurélia or Clotilde sleep on a comfortable bed, Nununo and his wife share a narrow bed and their kids sleep on the floor. Yet, as we see in the second quote, these differences, of which the working class shows itself to be very aware, are not enough to set them completely apart as they realize that there is a moral code of mutual respect that is more important than class alone.

It is precisely the solidarity of the working class with the bourgeois in the novel that will bring the man who attempted to murder Aurélia to justice. As it happens, Kununo and his friends, following the trail of rumors, end up tracking down and delivering the wrongdoer to justice, to the shame of the police and the State. In the face of these facts, as far as the plot goes, it seems that the novel draws a somewhat harmonious picture in which bourgeoisie and working class are together in a struggle against a corrupt, suspicious and inefficient State. However, a closer look at the ways in which the narrative is laid out evidences not only that this solidarity only happens due to a large degree of commitment from the working classes, but also that their efforts are neither reciprocated nor largely recognized.

Upon Aurélia's return home from her many days in hospital, she is overwhelmed by visitors. Nonetheless, while her father, a lawyer, the bishop, two ministers and other members of the "high society" are invited into her house, members of the working class who were eager to see Aurélia

alive and healthy are allowed just to agglomerate on the street outside, in the rain. In fact, Aurélia only goes to the balcony to wave to her popular supporters following a request from the Director of the Police Department – one of the visitors invited in – who asked her to do so in order to avoid extended popular gatherings, and their subversive potential. Additionally, none of the working class captors of her assassin are called in for a personal thanks or given any sign of public recognition, nor are they mentioned by their name again through the end of the narrative.

Seen from this perspective, the novel's picture of an apparently harmonious coexistence between classes in contemporary São Tomé and Príncipe is built up on rather fragile foundations that have historical precedents. Just as the people once supported a class of intellectual revolutionaries who promised them freedom in exchange for their trust, only to later on see them become a distant and corrupt class of governors, it seems now that by putting their hopes in the emerging bourgeoisie the working class is committing the same mistake. Regardless of the righteousness and well-meaning intentions of some of its members, and despite its disputes with the State, the bourgeoisie is still depicted as much closer to the State and much further away from the members of the working class – physical(ly) and culturally. Despite their differences, enacted mostly when it comes to wealth distribution, in *Aurélia de Vento*, the State and bourgeoisie are much closer than the bourgeoisie and the working class, on whose support the bourgeois ascendance depends.

If taken as a story that shows the contemporary dynamics of class, *Aurélia de Vento* constitutes a still life picture of a society in a whirl of change. In terms of wealth distribution and inequality, despite the emergence of a culture of solidarity, divisions remain and seem to become deeper. Yet, wealth and influence appear to be in transition, changing from the hands of the State to the hands of a bourgeoisie which still finds the support of a working class willing to accept an elite which, although irreconcilably different, can still give them a degree of respect and recognition. However, this far echo of Amílcar Cabral's plea for an alliance between bourgeoisie and peasantry, of which we spoke in Chapter 2, loses its strength when we analyze the novel's actual representation of wealth inequality. As we have demonstrated, the tensions presented in the narrative open possibilities for a gloomy future, as distance between the classes does not seem to be surpassed by the episodes of solidarity, and the bourgeoisie seem to be unwilling to accept Amílcar Cabral's advice and suicide as a class ("A arma") to give way to the rise of the local working class. In its portrait of the rise of a Santomean bourgeoisie, *Aurélia de Vento* captures the pivotal moment in which an alliance between working class and bourgeoisie is still possible, but their outcomes are yet uncertain.

Similarly to what happens in *Aurélia de Vento*, wealth and transition, as well as wealth in transition, are important themes throughout José Eduardo Agualusa's *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*. References to wealth in various forms, along with the continuous change of holders to which it is

subjected, are a meaningful feature of this narrative of transition. Yet, this novel follows a completely different path from the one taken by its Santomean counterpart. It treats the theme of wealth explicitly, turning it into one of the central threads connecting the trajectories of all the characters together, and it focuses on the processes involved in the acquisition of material wealth rather than on its condensation in social classes. For this reason, to “follow the money” – or rather to “follow the diamonds”— is crucial for the comprehension of the type of changes that take place in Angolan society during the 28 years of the narrative.

The importance of wealth in *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento* is made clear already in the outset of the story, composed of brief passages taking place right before the independence of Angola – between the Carnation Revolution in April of 1974 and the country’s Independence in November of 1975. The narrative is then adorned by rich illustrations of the dimension of the wealth of the settlers who were leaving Luanda:

Os primeiros tiros assinalaram o início das grandes festas de despedida. Jovens morriam nas ruas, agitando bandeiras, e enquanto isso os colonos dançavam. . . .

O que não conseguirmos beber deixamos com vocês, disse [Rita], mostrando a Orlando a despensa onde se amontoavam caixas com os melhores vinhos portugueses: Bebam-nas. O importante é que não fique nenhuma para os comunistas festejarem.

Três meses mais tarde o prédio estava quase vazio. Em contrapartida, Luso não sabia onde colocar tantas garrafas de vinho, grades de cerveja, comida enlatada, presuntos, postas de bacalhau Orlando recebera de um amigo, colecionador de carros desportivos, um *Chevrolet Corvette* e um *Alfa Romeo GTA*. Outro entregara-lhe as chaves do apartamento.¹⁴ (Agualusa *Teoria* 17, emphasis of the original)

Yet, as the narrative shows, regardless of Rita's – Ludo's neighbor – will, wealth changed hands in postcolonial Angola, just as their apartments in the luxurious *Prédio dos Invejados* were later to be occupied by humble families and their animal husbandry. Perhaps the most striking example of this process is represented by the trajectory of Ludo's brother-in-law, Orlando – or, to put it better, the trajectory of his diamonds. The wealthy sometimes nationalist, sometimes settler, mestizo Orlando was a man caught up in the ambivalences of his society: “Compreendia a necessidade de maior justiça social, mas os comunistas, ameaçando nacionalizar tudo, assustavam-no. Expropriar a propriedade privada. Expulsar os brancos. Partir os dentes à pequena burguesia. Ele, Orlando, orgulhava-se do sorriso

¹⁴ The first gunshots signaled the start of the big farewell parties. Young people were dying in the streets, waving flags, and meanwhile the settlers danced. . . . / ‘Whatever we can’t drink we’ll leave for you,’ she said to Orlando, pointing at the pantry stacked high with cases of the finest Portuguese wines. ‘Drink them. The important thing is that there mustn’t be anything left over for the communists to celebrate with. / Three months later, the apartment block was almost empty. Ludo, meanwhile, didn’t know where to put so many bottles of wine, crates of beer, tins of food, hams, pieces of salt cod Orlando had received from one friend – a collector of sports cars – a Chevrolet Corvette and an Alfa Romeo GTA. Another had given him the keys to his apartment. (8)

perfeito, não queria usar dentadura.”¹⁵ (16-17). An engineer, and on employee of the colonial company responsible for the extraction of diamonds, Orlando was reluctant to leave Angola alongside other members of the colonial elite until he managed to steal a bunch of high-quality diamonds. These stones, first sought after by the fearful Capitan of the Portuguese Army, Jeremias Carrasco, who accidentally kills Orlando while trying to get to the stones, end up in the hands of Ludo. After running out of food in the isolation of decades locked up in her apartment, she uses the stones as shining bait in her solitary hunt for pigeons. One of the pigeons eats a couple of stones escapes Ludo’s pan, but is caught by the equally starving and much more miserable Pequeno Soba (Little Chief), who eats the pigeon and keeps the stones. A revolutionary at heart, whose true devotion to the revolutionary cause and the people made him a threat to the political regime, after being arrested, tortured and almost killed, Pequeno Soba uses the stones to open a courier company and thrives, decades later, in the neoliberal Angola. But this is not all. At the end of the narrative we are told that Ludo still has some of the stones, left behind as they were too big for the palate of any pigeon. These are then given to Jerónimo, which is the new identity of Jeremias after spending almost three decades with the Mucubal peoples of the South of the country, as he begs for help to buy his adoptive people the land necessary for their subsistence; land which is now

¹⁵ “He understood the necessity for greater social justice, but the communists, who were threatening to nationalise everything, alarmed him. Expropriating private property. Expelling the whites. Knocking out all the petite bourgeoisie’s teeth. He, Orlando, took pride in having a perfect smile, and he had no desire for dentures.” (7)

being divided between members of the country's elite, formed mainly by politicians who once were revolutionaries.

The long, contorted story of Orlando's diamonds and their impact on people's lives is the most consistent example of Agualusa's portrayal of wealth creation and distribution in his novel. Its focus on the transmission of wealth between individuals rather than institutions evidences the novels' concentration on the lower, productive stratum of society. Therefore State wealth plays a small role in this novel. As we have seen in Chapter 1 of this study, the State in *Teoria* is perceived as a performative institution, existing to the extent that active individuals enact it. For this reason, State appropriation of wealth in *Teoria* is the appropriation of wealth by some officials of the State, such as what happens with the land of the Mucubal people, now the property of a General. Hence, the emphasis is on the neoliberal system as a root cause of the unequal distribution of wealth in that society:

A guerra terminara. Nos hotéis de Luanda acotovelavam-se empresários vindos de Portugal, Brasil, África do Sul, Israel, China, todos à procura de dinheiro rápido num país em frenética reconstrução.

...

Tudo o que é sólido se desmancha no ar, murmurou Monte, pensando em Marx, e pensando, como Marx não em aviões, mas no sistema capitalista, que ali, em Angola, prosperando

como bolor em ruínas, vinha já apodrecendo tudo, corrompendo tudo, e, dessa forma, engendrando o próprio fim.¹⁶ (151)

As a result, the Luanda of *Teoria* is one of the new fortunes acquired through the redistribution of wealth acquired dubiously. Reflecting the country's history of infrastructural underdevelopment, lack of industrial park or of a legitimate economy raised from production and reinvestment, economic development of the characters who are not engaged in governmental activities seems to be determined by chance, luck, favor and opportunism. The lack of industrial activity gives way to an economic culture that is ready for the thriving of neoliberalism. Together with the foreign businessmen, comes the prostitution of very young women (called *catorzinhas*), the engagement of very young men in crime – such as the gang that recruited Sabalu –, and the general impoverishment of the local populations, as salaries are low and profits are not reinvested locally. With the passing of the years, no character in *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento* who improved his/their economic situation significantly succeeded entirely due to the remuneration of their work. Pequeno Soba was favored by luck when eating the right pigeon, Pappy Bolingô and Nasser Evangelista – not to

¹⁶ The war had ended. In the hotels of Luanda, businessmen from Portugal, Brazil, South Africa and Israel all rubbed shoulders, in search of quick money in a country going through a process of frantic reconstruction. / . . . / 'All that is solid melts into air,' muttered Monte, thinking about Marx, and thinking, like Marx, not about planes but about the capitalist system, which there in Angola, thriving like mould amid ruins, had already begun to rot everything, to corrupt everything and, thus, to bring about its own end. (Hahn 153)

mention Ludo and Sabalu – were favored by the kindness of Pequeno Soba. Monte, who never made a fortune given his ideological principles still in line with the thoughts of Marx, managed to use his prestige to save his father-in-law from prison. The diamonds stolen by Orlando, costing both his and his wife's lives, were, in this story, the main source of wealth for the characters of the lower classes to succeed in life.

The observation of wealth distribution in *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento* therefore shows a diverse process which does still have points of contact with the economics of transition and the transition of economics in *Aurélia de Vento*. In the Guinean novel, we have essentially the condensation of social classes, mainly of the local bourgeoisie, around an established State economy that is changing into an agricultural economy and is essentially private. This movement is visible to the extent that Ministro Domingos Ventura not only loses the law suit for Pedro Santos, a private entrepreneur, but also he cannot force the lawyer Altino Castro to take a case he does not want. The slow concentration of wealth in the hands of individuals in this story, therefore, indicates that the country is about to have a silent bourgeois revolution which, like many others before it, is founded on claims of moral righteousness and strength of character, but which, in reality, excludes the lower classes whose support it needs from the very beginning.

On the other hand, in *Teoria*, the representation of a system of production and class is not visible. What the novel shows is a city largely

divided between those who have access to wealth via privilege - such as the colonial settlers, those who took over that privilege as did the revolutionaries, and those who, in one way or another, managed to profit from this system to improve their daily lives. Therefore, economically speaking, Agualusa's Angola is much more open to the exploitation of neoliberalism than Bragança's self-contained São Tomé and Príncipe. The rise of a local economy is only depicted in *Teoria* towards the end of the novel, when we see Pequeno Soba investing locally in a series of areas such as services, real estate and the craft industry. Nonetheless, his investments, besides being promising, are revealed to be a small effort in a largely depleted economy that would require many people like himself to actually develop a social class with a means to dispute political power.

As regarding what they have in common, these two narratives of economic transition explore the new challenges involved in the aftermath of single-party State regimes and socialism in Portuguese-speaking Africa. Although they differ, as these narratives bring important elements that are in line with the realities of their contexts of production, they certainly point out the fact that in the unequal division of wealth, there are always a number of people left out. And when it comes to our corpus, the story of these people is told by the Cape Verdean *Marginais*.

4.3. *Private wealth*

Wealth in *Marginais* is no longer in the hands of the State or in transition to the pockets of the elite. In this novel, wealth is a private asset. Set between the mid-1980's and late-1990's, the novel offers us a portrait not only of a society divided between exploiters and exploited (Rocha 13), but also of a country lost in the hands of neoliberalism. If we take Jason W. Moore's proposition that "the production of surplus value is not only the proletarianization of labor and accumulation of capital but the production of global spaces of appropriation" (222), we will find a match for the role that this novel gives to the Island of Sal in this economic system. For Sérgio "a ilha do Sal está infestada de sanguessugas, coronéis que só pensam no vil metal e cultuam o desprezo pelos marginalizados"¹⁷, whose inhabitants live "sob a ditadura dos operadores turísticos e dos governos corruptos"¹⁸ (Rocha 29;30). This statement, uttered early on in the novel, when the Pitboys are to deciding on a representative idol – Che Guevara's revolutionary enthusiasm was chosen over Jesus' "disposable miracles and hopes" (29-30) – reveals one of the greatest problems of the country: a careless, enriched bourgeoisie that sells the country and its underprivileged inhabitants to the transnational tourism industry.

As we have seen in Chapters 1 and 2, although the role of the State in *Marginais* is minimal, it is still an essential agent for the marginalization of its populations' lower stratum. While the novel denotes the complete

¹⁷ "Sal is infested with bloodsuckers, colonels interested only in filthy money and despise those in the margins"

¹⁸ "under the dictatorship of the tourism industry and of corrupt governments"

absence of a welfare state, the State is only visible through its ideological and repressive apparatuses. It first selectively teaches some its inhabitants their unavoidably subaltern place in society, mining their dreams and potential, so that later on they become disciplined by an implacable coercive apparatus. In doing so, the poorest fraction of the country's population is systematically marginalized, that is to say, left outside the systems of privilege, citizenship and legality, a point from which they are dissocialized and dehumanized, and are ready to be appropriated as a resource by the system – “Somos maltratados pela lei, duplamente maltratados pela miserável condição de vida que levamos.” (30)

Here, again, Jason W. Moore offers us a helping hand to understand the impact of transnational capital on the industrial manner through which people are formatted to serve as actual fuel for its engine in *Marginais*. In his recent book *Capitalism and the Web of Life*, Moore sets out to propose a new way to understand the systemic crises that have been plaguing capitalism in the early 21st Century. However, it is through his description of how the system has developed that he can help us to better grasp the representation of wealth inequality and exploitation in the novel. Drawing on Marx's proposition that capitalism demands the appropriation of nature, Moore argues that the system is actually “*a way of organizing nature*” (2 emphasis of the original) and that the separation between Nature/Society is not arbitrary but historically conceived precisely to allow the appropriation of Nature – understood as non-human nature. This, argues Moore (13-18),

was at the heart of the colonial enterprise when slaves were necessarily de-humanized in order to be appropriated and capitalized – just as nature was. Returning to our object of analysis, set more than a century after the end of slavery in the Portuguese-speaking world – driven, as we know, by a transformation in the system set in motion due to the advance of industrialization –, we see in the novel the process of marginalization is that which de-humanizes people enough to have them serving as cheap labor in the age of global capitalism.¹⁹

This complicity between State, through the offer of minimal welfare state, heavy ideological, coercive apparatus, and private initiative – embodied in the narrative mainly by tourism – is decisive in the lives of all the characters surrounding Sérgio. If we start by looking at his life, we see that the poverty at home, the disdain at school and the lack of opportunities were key to his early involvement in theft, vandalism, drug consumption and trafficking. His friend, Pianista, sharing the same structural conditions but amassing the trauma of his rape by the police, soon enters a life of crime which includes drug trafficking for an Italian boss and prostitution, where he used to recruit young girls to appease the urges of excited European tourists. Mirna, the only strong female presence in the group of marginals, was also victimized by poverty, domestic violence and sexual abuse, dying young and disillusioned, as a prostitute. One after the other, Sérgio's closest

¹⁹ Moore sees cheap labor as one of the four main pillars of capitalism: "Capital . . . must ceaselessly search for, and find ways to produce, Cheap Nature: a rising stream of low-cost food, labor-power, energy, and raw material to the factory gates (or office doors, or...). These are the Four Cheaps. The law of value in capitalism is a law of Cheap Nature." (53)

friends fall victim to a system of exploitation that disposes of their lives. Few are the characters that remain alive by the end of the novel. As Sérgio tells us, despite the growing tourism industry “os filhos da terra dificilmente conseguiam um bom trabalho”²⁰ (Rocha 88). In this scenario, young people were absorbed by the drug industry and prostitution, or in businesses such as restaurants and clubs, serving as “lavandaria – para lavagem de dinheiro sujo, claro”²¹ (91).

The setting up of Sal as a place of appropriation and of its people as de-humanized commodity had yet more dramatic costs for other characters in the novel. The first and most widely-known consequence of a State politics of neglect of the poor present in the novel is immigration. Affecting Sérgio’s mother, who left the country to become cheap labor in developed Italy, it can be argued that abandonment was one of the most important factors in the protagonist’s involvement with crime, as he was left on his own by the only person with whom he had a true emotional tie at the critical age of sixteen, rather a symbolic moment as Althusser (155-156) has shown. The novel, therefore, problematizes this phenomenon as it exposes its twofold impact. Locally, immigration contributes to the further impoverishment of the local economy by draining it from substantial manpower, and by flooding the internal economy with the unsustainable practice of remittances; internationally, immigration provides rich countries

²⁰ “locals would hardly get a good job”

²¹ “laundry – laundry for dirty money, of course”

with a fresh wave of cheap workers necessary to keep their privileges in check. However, the second and perhaps most shocking of these consequences is the impact of human traffic in the narrative. We hear stories, such as that of “indigentes como Adalgisa, Paula, Astrogildo, Elton e tantos outros que foram raptados por vendedores de órgãos humanos que facturam milhares de contos nos bancos de órgãos para acidentados no estrangeiro”²² (30), or that of Mirna’s mother who “vendera a filhinha de dois anos a um casal de turistas alemães”²³(100) to afford bandages for her other daughter, who was badly wounded accidentally during an episode of domestic violence. Still, we see that this kind of fate is not considered the worst that can happen in the wretched universe of *Marginais*. As Sérgio puts it:

Ela iria ter uma boa educação, viveria longe dessa miséria dissimulada. Meu lamento é para aqueles que ficaram para trás. Havia rumores que os estrangeiros raptavam ou compravam crianças para extraírem órgãos e faziam fortunas aos vendê-los na Europa. Não me importava vender um dos meus rins em troca de uma pequena fortuna. Dizem que há

²² “indigents like Adalgisa, Paula, Astrogildo, Elton and so many others that were kidnaped by sellers of human organs profiting thousands in cash at organ banks for victims of accidents abroad”

²³ “sold her two-year old daughter to a couple of German tourists”

um médico que vem de vez em quando e oferece um
passaporte europeu a quem doar um rim.²⁴ (101)

The contemplation of organ donation as a way out can be seen as one of the dramatic consequences of the insertion of the Island of Sal into Cape Verdean neoliberalism, and playing its role in the unequal system of distribution of wealth under the capitalist world-system. Aided by the State and a small local elite fully enmeshed in government, as the candidacy of Dr. Apolinário to the local administration demonstrates, Sal is made into a space for appropriation *par excellence*. Since the island, as well as the country as a whole, lacks wealth in the form of minerals, fertile land or industry, we see the transformation of its people into the actual raw material to feed the international system of exploitation of nature and men alike. The novel shows how the systematic process of marginalization of its poor population de-humanizes them to the point in which, for survival, they agree to sell each other, as well as themselves, as units or in parts. History repeats itself. As the novel makes clear, poverty is a *sine qua non* in this industry of people, as the unavoidability of inequality is essential in making these people believe there is no alternative but to succumb to the available routes of subsistence.

²⁴ She would have good education, would live far from this disguised misery. I am only sorry for those who were left behind. There were rumors saying that foreigners kidnapped or bought children to take their organs and would make fortunes selling them in Europe. I would not mind selling one of my kidneys in exchange of a small fortune. They say there is a doctor who comes from time to time and offers an European passport to those willing to donate a kidney.

Put alongside the other four novels of our corpus, *Marginais* offers us a grim view of a neoliberal postcoloniality. Its utterly deregulated economy and its lack of industrialization of mineral and agricultural wealth shows to be an incredibly successful recipe for exploitation, which commodifies the very bodies of its populations to make a profit. The novels' naturalist aesthetics and determinist approach to Sérgio's wretched coming-of-age narrative, curiously enough, establishes a close aesthetic relation with the function of the *bildungsroman* in *Tiara*. While in the Guinean novel we have the rather disillusioned trajectory of a romantic heroine into another ordinary, failure-prone second-class citizen diminished by the rise of the institution of the State, in *Marginais* the submission of a State, that has become minimal, to international capitalism seems to point to the unavoidable end of the revolutionary time that marks the outset of Tiara's journey. In this respect, Franco Moretti's conceptualization of the end of the *bildungsroman* follows the same general lines. According to him, "[t]he world of the late *Bildungsroman* has solidified into impersonal institutions" (233). In face of this, one can observe that the heroes of this type of *bildungsroman* become younger and younger "because, historically, the relevant symbolic process is no longer growth but regression" (231). This regression, very much connected to the traumatic effects of the tragedy of World War I for European subjectivity, "would thus be the narrative form that liberal Europe saw as an anthropological reversal from the individual as an autonomous entity to the individual as mere member of a mass" (232).

Taken as a form of *bildungsroman*, *Marginais* certainly shows an important number of the characteristics highlighted by Moretti as inherent to works of the late phases of the genre. However, whereas Moretti's reflection on the European *bildungsroman* is wrapped up by the clash of the ideal of modern man and the cruelties of World War I, the tragedy in Portuguese-speaking Africa is that of the fall of a revolutionary anticolonial ideal in the face of the unavoidable return of a highly exploitative form of international capitalism. Therefore, Sérgio's narrative is one centered on youth because these characters seem stuck in their subjective development as, while they move forward in time, their country seems to move backwards in history, towards a more cruel and painful form of exploitation since this regression happened despite the lessons learned during times of colonialism.

Consequently, regardless of the novel's undeniable differences when compared to its other four counterparts in this study, given the very peculiar historical development of its context of production, we cannot deny its relevance, given that it advances important discussions when it comes to contemporary portrayals of wealth in the literatures of Portuguese-speaking Africa. As the fever of consumerism and globalization spreads under the regime of neoliberalism in each of the five countries represented in this corpus, a literary representation of its systemic malaise, intra- and internationally speaking, supplements a critical tradition of the current state of affairs, already existing in the literatures of the countries included in this study, by going back to its principles. If in the last 40 years the countries of

Portuguese-speaking Africa successfully got rid of colonialism, they have still to live with its basic and underlying problems as the capitalist world-system still thrives on their population's miserable condition.

4.4. Conclusion: the matter postcolonial wealth

In “What postcolonial studies doesn’t say” Neil Lazarus re-tailors one of his long-standing critical stances on postcolonial studies that is present, in many ways, throughout his body of work. In this 2011 article, Lazarus re-claims that “postcolonial theory [and criticism] is inclined to conflate categories of ‘colonialism’ and ‘imperialism’, but that it tends to construe ‘colonialism’ as an exercise solely in *political* domination, of the global projection of *power*” (11; emphasis in the original), and that “postcolonial *criticism*, as an institutionalized mode of academic practice, has tended to turn a blind eye to what this [contemporary] body of literature has notably been concerned to put on display”, which comprises also “the specifically capitalist dimensions of colonial experience” (14 emphasis of the original). Certainly pertinent for the field of the contemporary postcolonial African literatures written in Portuguese, Lazarus’ critique is echoed by the novels included in this study. As this chapter aims to show, the novels analyzed confer a key role on wealth creation and division which, besides their differences, indicate a growing awareness that the roots of the

structural malaise afflicting their histories is systemic and runs deeper than colonialism.

Written and published, on average, three decades after the independence of their respective countries, each of the novels analyzed in this study attests to the undeniable material weight of wealth production, circulation and distribution in their texts. With the political and economic departure of the colonizer, new forms of articulation of these two complementary realms of society had to be reengineered from within. As a result, each of these five countries has come up with its unique postcolonial trajectory of reconstruction and distribution of wealth that, nonetheless, shares a historical commonality. In one way or another, they are all written palimpsestically over a history of colonialism, which is but a chapter of the *longue durée* of the capitalist world-system.

The comparative study undertaken in the previous pages has shown that the novels of our corpus do not take matters of wealth lightly. As we sought to demonstrate, despite resorting to myriad forms and intensities, no novel has managed to draw a picture of society disregarding the relevance that wealth distribution, or better yet, wealth inequality, has for the state of affairs of the postcolonial condition. Even if wealth cannot be said to constitute the central theme of at least four of the five novels analyzed, it constitutes an inescapable structural factor in each of the narratives. Whereas wealth distribution, poverty and its consequences in the lives of postcolonial subjects are indeed central in *Marginais*, the same cannot be

said of *Tiara*, whose main theme is the coming-of-age of revolutionary dreams. Although barely mentioned until very late in the narrative, when evoked, bad wealth management and distribution are taken as the ultimate proofs of the demise of the revolutionary ideal, constituting the pivotal moment in which the protagonist decides to abandon the cause that drove her journey of maturity. *Campo de Trânsito*, in its turn, is a novel in which biopolitics and State apparatus are the central themes; nonetheless, the argument simply could not be made without mention of the end of such a highly organized form of physical exploitation: the generation of wealth for the State. The same is true in *Aurélia de Vento* and *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*. No picture of the Santomean society could be painted without continuous allusions to the material cement of wealth sticking its social organizations together, and no predictions of its future reconfiguration should be made without attention to it. For this reason, wealth and social organization are openly used in the Angolan narrative as the thread that links people as well as past, present and future together. Agualusa's depiction of wealth transference in a country of constant changes playfully reminds us that although Love goes by, "diamonds are forever".²⁵

²⁵ Love, or *Amor*, is the name of the pigeon used as a mode of correspondence between Monte and his girlfriend in the beginning of Agualusa's novel. This is the pigeon that eats some of the diamonds – stolen by Orlando – used as bait later on by Ludo, and flies away before she can catch him. He is caught later on by Pequeno Soba (Little Chief), who finds the stones and acquires a small fortune that he uses to change his life.

Seen through their points of contact when it comes to their representation of wealth, each of these five novels points to diverse, yet interlinked, economic postcolonial unfoldings that conjugate intra- and inter- national economic dynamics, to the extent that the colonial past is undeniably present in the contemporary forms of wealth generation and distribution that they depict. The *longue durée* of a system of exploitation is clearly seen in each of the analyzed fictional constructs. Colonialism is clearly addressed in *Tiara*, *Teoria* and *Aurélia*; in *Campo*, the perpetuation of the system at the end of the narrative leaves us with an idea of *durée*; similar to what happens in *Campo*, in *Marginais*, the idea of *durée* is given by an end that entails a new, cyclical beginning. Nonetheless, differently from the Mozambican story, the Cape Verdean narrative names, from its outset, the system of exploitation in place: international capitalism and neoliberalism.

As we approach the end of this study in the realm of comparative literature of Portuguese-speaking Africa, we return to the proposition of Neil Lazarus with which we have opened this section. As we hope to have demonstrated, the works included in this study do support his claim for a change of shifts in postcolonial theory and criticism. These novels demonstrate that, at least when it comes to contemporary Portuguese-speaking Africa, a change in the postcolonial critical paradigm is imperative. It is clear that a critique of systemic modes of wealth accumulation and division is part and parcel of how these novels project

reality into fiction. It is also evident that these changes are perceived in a *durée*, which seems to be an inherent condition of postcoloniality in its material and cultural unfolding. Nonetheless, the change that these literatures demand from theory and criticism does not seem to stop there. They too require changes when it comes to the ways in which these material tensions are seen in their political and cultural aspects. For, with the departure of the settlers and rearranging of internal systems, newly situated challenges were added to the old lingering ones, composing quite intricate and sophisticated scenarios that cannot be understood only with the help of a set of theoretical and critical tools designed to understand oppositions almost strictly in the realm of colonizers and the colonized. Which is to say that, together with a much-needed material revolution to equip postcolonial theory and criticism to account for the *longue durée* of exploitation in the global theatre of the capitalist world-system, there is also a need for an ideological shift to take into account the impact of the local dynamics of politics and power in the understanding of contemporary complex and diverse forms of postcoloniality.

Conclusion: Towards a Late

Postcoloniality

I would go as far as saying that it is the critic's job to provide resistances to theory, to open it up toward historical reality, toward society, toward human needs and interests, to point up those concrete instances drawn from everyday reality that lie outside or just beyond the interpretative area necessarily designated in advance and thereafter circumscribed by every theory.

Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*.

In this concluding section we return to the questions orientating this thesis. We started this work proposing that both the fields of international criticism of the African Literatures written in Portuguese and the field of Postcolonial Studies should extend their concerns to the postcolony's internal axis of tensions, whose relevance is essential for the comprehension of contemporary challenges in these spaces of entangled time. Departing from this proposition, we have looked into a selected corpus of contemporary novels from the literatures of Portuguese-speaking Africa to demonstrate the ways in which this transnational space can offer important coordinates if we are to reassess the contours of the concept of the postcolony.

Our corpus' literary projections of State, violence and wealth have demonstrated that their historical importance is not only circumscribed to colonial times. If during the times of Portuguese rule in Portuguese-speaking Africa, the colonial State used violence as a tool to expropriate the colonized people of their wealth, this thesis has shown that although the political situation of these countries has changed in the aftermath of independence, the *modus operandi* of State oppression in place has not substantially done so. The fact that these texts produced at the beginning of the 21st Century still share structural thematic features found already in a preceding phase of their countries' literatures and histories, reveals a continuity that evidences a postcolonial *longue durée* which is not interrupted even after more than three decades since political independence has been achieved. Through myriad aesthetic resources involving the *bildungsroman*, allegory, fragmentation and naturalism, these novels manage to weave commentaries on structural features of their respective and diverse societies that are, nonetheless, converging and interrelated.

In Chapter 1 we have seen how these five novels conceive the nation as clearly separate from the State. While the nation is perceived in the uses and customs of its people regardless of the fashioning of the narrative, we have the representations of a State that is repressive, distant, corrupt and elitist. If in the past the nation was represented in literature as the home of its native inhabitants, the novels we analyzed have shown full awareness of the power of the nation as discourse by an intra-colonial State, whose

manipulators are secluded from its people. As a result, this movement of dissociation of the idea of nation from the idea of State evidences the abandonment of traditional literary projects of nation-building, indicating a movement towards a constructive critique of the process of State-building. Despite the colossal role of the various literary projects of nation-building in the cultural history of these countries, the gradual withdrawal from it is not a bad omen. On the contrary, it evidences the consolidation of ideas of nation that are plural, multilayered and apparently at peace with their colonial history. On the other hand, the display of awareness of the existence of a State in need of criticism shows an increase in political awareness, marking a critical turn towards the *intra*-national aspects of social experience that compose one of the main features of the latest phase of their postcoloniality.

The second theme, running through all five narratives of our corpus that was isolated in this study is the ongoing violence as a structural force in the current organization of the social formations portrayed in the novels. In Chapter 2 we have seen how, despite the undeniable changes that took place in the fabric of these novels' fictional societies since the end of colonialism, violence did not recede in terms of prominence or reach. The novels show that, as the years passed in the aftermath of independence, the representations of a State violence portrayed as typically physical and explicit, give way gradually to less overt and more symbolic forms of repression and social control performed by members of civil society. This

movement, as we have highlighted, seems to be intimately connected with the demise of the authoritarian single-party State and with the rise of a dominant class stemming from it. Seen through this prism, we have noticed that symbolic violence increases as the socialist experiment is abandoned, the political system is opened and neoliberal economic practices are adopted, which led us to the theme of wealth, developed in the final analytical chapter.

Wealth, as we saw in Chapter 4, is the missing piece in the equation involving State and violence in these novels' portrayal of contemporary postcolonialities. The three stages of wealth accumulation identified among the narratives not only match these countries' historical development, but also correspond to the way in which violence evolves from physical to symbolic in a conjuncture of massive opposition and antagonism towards an intra-colonial State no longer seen in consubstantiation with the nation. In the chapter we call attention to the depictions of the process of class formation which are present in the analyzed texts, and see how they point to diverse pathways for the postcolonial periods to come.

Together, the ways in which State, violence and wealth are represented in the novels of our corpus show that, when it comes to fiction, a turn from an *inter*-national perspective to an *intra*-national perspective has already taken place. This does not mean, however, that these novels are blind to the forces of international capitalism, but it demonstrates their emphasis on the denunciation of internal factors and actors who facilitate

the exploitation of these countries, and its peoples, in the international stage of the capitalist world-system. In face of these facts, it becomes clear that these novels' portrayal of problems perceived primarily as a result of internal forms of State intra-colonialism, escape the scope of a concept of postcoloniality so historically grounded on the interaction between ex-colonizer and ex-colonized, which is characteristic of postcolonial studies. Therefore, in order to address the mismatch between a postcolonial sovereign contemporaneity and a conceptual language conceived to handle foreign domination, we propose the concept of *late postcoloniality*.

The concept of *late postcoloniality* recuperates the much-needed episodic perspective to the dynamic space of entangled temporalities that is the postcolony. Its proposition does not cancel or affect the idea of postcolonial as a *longue durée*, but it prevents the postcolonial from becoming a concept evolving infinitely "through a homogeneous, empty time" (Benjamin, "Theses on the philosophy of history" 261). Departing from our case-study in the realm of the African literatures written in Portuguese, we propose the concept of late postcoloniality to describe a postcolonial phase in which tensions within postcolonial societies are no longer perceived solely as a result of the opposition between colonizer and colonized. Located necessarily after the political stabilization of the postcolony, which is characterized by the demise of organized military threat to a postcolony's sovereignty, the idea of late postcoloniality seeks to reimbue the concept of postcoloniality with a timeliness that is lost as soon

as the foreign invader, around which the concept has been developed, departs – at least politically speaking – for good.

The connection of late postcoloniality with the consolidation of a postcolony's secure political status is a necessary one for two reasons. Firstly, since the postcolony's economic subjugation is an underlying factor of its position within the capitalist world-system – from colonialism to neoliberalism –, its economic subaltern situation constitutes a determinant condition of its postcoloniality. Secondly, given the essential relevance that political autonomy has in the postcolony's internal material conditions, such as organization of power and distribution of wealth, its impact is first felt by national subjects as they carry out the structural reorganizations of their societies, *vis-à-vis* a colonial order premised on the presence of the foreign settler. Hence, the concept is productive as it does not deny the lingering of economic relations of a colonial nature. Its relevance lies in its supplementary nature, given that its main proposal is to reinstitute the importance of a postcolony's political sovereignty. Thus a new set of people composed in general by a country's native elite will seize power, reconfiguring the local structures of privilege and oppression under which the capitalist world-system can operate at its best. The concept of late postcoloniality emphasizes the role of postcolonial subjects' agency and accountability, as it pushes for the recognition of colonialism in a *longue durée* of capitalist exploitation that is not circumscribed by the presence of the foreign invader. Seen through this prism, late postcoloniality is a

concept whose efficacy lies in the ability to denote the lingering of coloniality in the aftermath of political independence.

The idea of a post-independence, internal or native coloniality, as *late* postcoloniality takes from Edward Said's understanding of the term in his posthumously published book *On Late Style*. In this work that collects essays in which he discourses on late style inspired by Theodor Adorno's observation of the phenomenon in the compositions of Beethoven ("Late Style in Beethoven"), Said makes a number of observations that illuminate the fruitful use of the word for our conceptual proposition. Late style, for Adorno, is a controversial, dissonant aesthetic style achieved by certain artists at the end of their productive lives. For Said, however, the idea of lateness trespasses the simple circumscription of a parcel in a lifetime and takes on the contours of a more general style, which can be more prominent throughout the works of certain artists who live in specific historical contexts as was the case of Adorno. Therefore, lateness for Said – as well as for Adorno – is "'lost totality', and therefore catastrophic . . . is the idea of surviving beyond what is acceptable and normal; in addition, lateness includes the idea that one cannot really go beyond lateness at all, cannot transcend or lift oneself out of lateness, but can only deepen the lateness" (13). In the light of our concept, therefore, late postcoloniality denotes the lost totality of a finished idea of colonialism, to which the exploiter is, necessarily, a foreign invader. It is catastrophic because it denounces the pervasiveness of its underlying system of material exploitation. It expresses

the survival of coloniality beyond the end of its system of political domination. It also includes the idea that after the dissociation of exploitation from any specific color, race or passport, one cannot really go beyond it as it is everywhere. And finally, the idea of late postcoloniality interrupts the hope for a redemptive sublation, transcendence, or escape. Traces of colonial exploitation, in late postcoloniality, come to integrate the genetic code of the postcolony as a space of entangled time.

Originating from observations drawn from early 21st Century literary texts from Portuguese-speaking Africa, this concept is at the heart of the contribution of this thesis to the fields of knowledge in which it is inserted. It calls the attention of the critics of these literatures to the relevance of matters of timeliness and lateness, which allow no one writing in the present the comforting consolation of settled certainties when their objects of analysis keep changing trajectories in a continuously developing time. It also reaches out to the field of Postcolonial Studies by demonstrating that, if it is to have a future as an area of academic inquiry, it has to inform itself with situated analyses drawn from the myriad places in the world united under the label of postcolony. If Postcolonial Studies is to have a future, this future certainly lies in peripheral loci of theorization.

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